

I.N.I.

Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 13, 2018
Acts 16:6-10

In Christ Jesus, who has called us to go out into all the world and preach the Good News, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

This morning we close out our six week journey through the book of Acts. The past two weeks we heard of Paul and Barnabas as they began their mission work in Antioch of Syria and traveled to Asia Minor where Paul preached in another city called Antioch, of Pisidia. When they returned home Paul attended the special Council in Jerusalem. Shortly thereafter Paul and Barnabas decided to go on another missionary journey but they could not settle on who would go along, Barnabas wanted to take his cousin Mark along again but Paul said “no.” He did not trust that Mark would stay with them since he went home early the last time. This little squabble caused Barnabas to go on his own journey to Cyprus and Paul chose Silas as his new companion . They left Antioch in Syria to revisit some of the churches in Asia Minor.

We read in verse 5, the verse before our text begins: **SO THE CHURCHES WERE STRENGTHENED IN THE FAITH, AND INCREASED IN NUMBER DAILY.**

Now it was time to go somewhere else. Paul initially wanted to go on to Asia to proclaim the Gospel for there were many large cities along the coast, but the Lord saw to it that Paul and Silas did not go there but brought the saving Gospel to Europe instead.

And that is our theme for this morning.

GOD GUIDES OUR EVANGELIZING (Good-Newsing)

Our first verse again reads: **NOW WHEN THEY HAD GONE THROUGH PHRYGIA AND THE REGION OF GALATIA, THEY WERE FORBIDDEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO PREACH THE WORD IN ASIA.** It would be interesting to know just how the Holy Spirit made it known to Paul and Silas not to go into Asia. Was it by a vision, or a direct revelation like the one Paul experienced when he saw Jesus in the sky on his way to Damascus? We do not know. The Bible does not reveal this. As curious we are, God decided we did not need to know. What we do need to know is that God guided His missionaries to take the Gospel where He knew it needed to go. And that is our first point: **I: Sometimes God says “No!”**

So Paul went north to the border of Mysia and when he tried to enter into Bithynia the Holy Spirit again did not allow it. Again we do not know how, but again we do not need to know. God was guiding their journey and their journey needed to go to elsewhere. So they went to Troas, a seaport city in the far north-western part of Asia Minor. They had traveled from one corner to the other corner of Asia Minor and the Holy Spirit had kept them from the most populous areas of Asia and from Bithynia. What did the Lord have in mind for them?

This time the Lord does reveal how He directed Paul and Silas into Macedonia. We read: **AND A VISION APPEARED TO PAUL IN THE NIGHT. A MAN OF MACEDONIA STOOD AND PLEADED WITH HIM, SAYING, "COME OVER TO MACEDONIA AND HELP US." NOW AFTER HE HAD SEEN THE VISION, IMMEDIATELY WE SOUGHT TO GO TO MACEDONIA, CONCLUDING THAT THE LORD HAD CALLED US TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THEM.**

The Greek word for “vision” comes from the word “to see.” God allowed special visions for Paul to see what His will for him was to be in regard to his proclaiming the Gospel. This “vision” was pretty straightforward. Paul saw a Macedonian man begging for help. His call was not for food or clothes or any other physical help, but for spiritual blessings from God.

By now it appears that Luke had joined the group for from now on we read the words “we” and “us” as Luke writes this account to his friend, Theophilus. **IMMEDIATELY WE SOUGHT TO GO TO MACEDONIA, CONCLUDING THAT THE LORD HAD CALLED US TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THEM.**

They knew what kind of help this Macedonian needed---spiritual help—the kind only the Gospel could provide. The verb term “preach the Gospel” comes directly from the Greek noun for “Good News” (euangelidzo) or “evangelize.” Turn the English noun into a verb and you can say God wanted them to “Good News” the Macedonians. Use the Greek letters to make an English word and you can say God wanted them to “evangelize” the Macedonians. They needed to hear the Good News that Jesus had come into the world to save sinners, all sinners like them! That is why we have given as our theme:

GOD GUIDES OUR EVANGELIZING (Good-Newsing)

Paul, Silas and Luke recognized this as a call from the Lord and immediately crossed over the Aegean Sea into Macedonia, (present day Bulgaria) and then eventually made their way down to Greece and to the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth. For the next almost 2 years Paul, Silas and Luke would evangelize--- or “good-news” Lydia and the other women at the river, the jailer and his family in Philippi; the Jews and Greeks in the synagogue at Thessalonica; the eager Bible students in Berea; the many idol worshippers in Athens on Mars Hill; Aquila, Priscilla and Apollos and the congregation in Corinth. The Lord had great work for this group to do and there will be many in heaven because the Lord directed this missionary group away from Asia into this portion of Eastern Europe for as our second point states:

II: Sometimes God says “Go!”

So how does this short sermon text apply to us at Peace Thru Christ? We know that God guides our evangelizing our good-newsing also. We need to get the word out, but He makes it work in the hearts. We do the speaking and talking, the advertising and spreading but He makes it work and grow and sometimes He says “No” but always He says “Go!”

After almost 2 years of efforting to get a pre-school started it seems as if God is saying “No” to this venture, but that does not mean He is saying “No” to future mission work. This door may be closing but other doors will be opening. When we see these opportunities we need to be ready, as was Paul, Silas and Luke, to immediately jump in, spread the Good News and tell others that we sinners need a Savior, one who has lived and died for us and has risen again to assure us of forgiveness, life and salvation.

A pastor friend wrote on this subject: *Our congregation once mailed 10,000 invitations to our school open house. Of the few visitors we had, none came due to the flyer. On the other hand, one morning I received a phone call from a neighbor down the street whom I had never met. He told me, “I want to become a Lutheran. What do I have to do?” The call led to a meeting with him and his wife. Information classes soon followed which they faithfully attended, and within a few months they became members. A carefully planned mass mailing yields no visible results, while doing nothing special brings an opportunity to share the Word. The lesson? We haven’t given up on outreach efforts.*

Remember Philip’s evangelism efforts. He was in Samaria and we are told great work was being done among many people through his preaching. But then the Lord moved him physically to go to a deserted road on the way to Gaza to speak to one individual—the Treasurer of the Queen of Ethiopia. This man was led by the Spirit to believe in Jesus as the Messiah and **“went on his way rejoicing.”** No doubt he took that same message of salvation with him to tell others in Ethiopia so the Good News of Jesus was now in a whole new continent.

This past Thursday we celebrated Jesus’ Ascension. His Ascension means that Jesus now rules and directs all things for the eternal good of His Church and the salvation of souls. As He directed Paul and his companions to bring the Gospel where it needed to go, so He leads and guides us as He uses us to extend His Kingdom through that Good News. Through you and me, as through Paul, Silas and Luke, the Lord gives the command to go and take the free water or life to the souls He brings into our lives.

It is interesting to note that the area that the Spirit did not allow Paul and Silas to go to, the coastland of Asia, later was heavily evangelized and it consisted of the 7 Christian churches to whom John wrote in His Revelation many years later. The Lord knows those who are His and His Word will get to them as He wills.

What a humbling privilege to be allowed to take part in this “good-newsing!” It is exciting to know that the Lord will put us in the right place at the right time in order that we might tell the Good News of Jesus.

What a shame if we do not do it!

What joy when we see His work being done and the amazing results! It is incredibly reassuring to know that the Word will always accomplish the Lord's will. May we gladly seize every opportunity for this blessed work!

*I hear the Savior calling! His call has urgency! Each moment souls are dying; Soon comes eternity!
And so, my precious Savior, This is my humble plea: Prepare me for my mission for You are calling
me.*

*Lord, gather all Your children Wherever they may be, And lead them on to heaven to live eternally.
With You, our loving Father, and Christ, our brother dear, Whose Spirit guards and gives us
The joy to persevere.
Amen.*