

Scripture Readings and Sermon

May 26, 2019 by Rev. Mark Brechin

Commentary on Acts 16:9-15 (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

After the Jerusalem Council, Paul and Barnabas returned up the coast to Antioch to share the news that the mission of the church now included Gentiles. Antioch is on the Turkey side near the modern day Syrian town of Aleppo that has been in the news so often. While Barnabas departed from Paul to the island of Cyprus, Paul continued along the coast through his home town of Tarsus to Lystra where he met Timothy. Paul's mission along the coast then ran into problems. In 16:6-7, Acts recounts that Paul was not allowed to preach in modern day Turkey by the Holy Spirit. These churches in Turkey will be the focus of the Book of Revelation. Instead, the passage today records Paul's call to go further than he expected into northern Greece called Macedonia. Philippi was on the major overland trade route between Byzantium (Constantinople) and Athens. With the conversion of Lydia, the door to Christian missions to Europe was open. Greece will become a major stepping stone to Rome.

Commentary on Revelation 21:10-11, 22-27 (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

Following the vision of the new heaven and the new earth, the passage then focuses on describing the city. The part of the passage which is omitted describes the size and wealth of the city echoing the description of the first Tabernacle and later the Temple. What should be noted, however, is that there is no temple or tabernacle. God is no longer separated from the people but rather God is among the people in their daily life. The true richness of the city is not the gold or jewels but "the glory of God". The city shines with the inner glow of the glory of God that is the Lamb. Since God is present, nothing unclean can exist but only those written in the book of life. The "Book" appears in Exodus 32:33, Psalm 69:28, and Malachi 3:16.

Commentary on John 14:22-29 (*Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#)*)

When Jesus gave them a "new commandment" in 13:34-35, it was after the last supper and in the context of his preparation for his death. Peter sensed this context when he asked "Where are you going?" (13:36) This question sets up four more questions asked by Peter (13:37), Thomas (14:5), Philip (14:8), and Judas {not Iscariot} (14:22). Jesus responds to Peter's second question by saying that he is going to the Father's house. Thomas asks how to get to the Father's house to which Jesus proclaims that he is the Way. Philip is not sure he will know the Father to which Jesus responds that not only have they seen the Father in everything the Jesus has done but they will also receive an Advocate from the Father. Judas, sensing that Jesus is speaking about his death, questions how they will be able to see the way to the Father once Jesus is gone. Jesus' response shifts the Father's house from a heavenly spiritual location to the hearts of the disciples who obey the new commandment. The Advocate will dwell in the house and will bring the Peace of God which drives out all fear. Two interesting things to note. First is that the Holy Spirit is called the Advocate only in this Chapter in John and nowhere else in the Scriptures. Second thing to note is that, while the term Father is used in Mark: 4 times, Luke: 15 times, and in Matthew: 43 times, the term Father occurs 108 times in John and 21 times in Chapter 14 alone.

Sermon Summary (*Youtube [Sermon Video](#)*)

Last week, Jesus gave the disciples a new commandment to "love one another as I have loved you." He said this after he told them that he was about to "leave" them but they could not follow. This started a series of questions about where he was going, how they would follow, and how they would know that they were there. Jesus ends these questions in the lesson today by telling them to simply

follow his word (the new commandment) and that Jesus and the Father along with the Advocate would make a home in their heart. This is the golden thread that links these three scripture readings.

On this Memorial Day weekend, it is interesting to note that ministers and the military both hope that one day they will be out of a job. For those in the military, their fondest wish is that the world and their families could live in peace and prosperity without conflict or the threat of conflict. For ministers, their fondest wish is the return of Jesus Christ which would put an end to the need for ministers or churches. Both of these dreams will come true when God dwells in each person's heart.

As the vision in Revelation portrays, there will be no need of a temple because God walks among God's children. There will be no more light in the temple because God's glory will shine throughout the city. There will be no need for an ark to contain the Book because all will be in the Book of Life. Where God is, there will be God's glory and where God's glory is will be God's peace. This is the peace that Jesus leaves them and it is the peace that Lydia found when she opened her heart to God's word in Acts. Lydia was not just a righteous woman but she was a powerful woman dealing in the precious and expensive purple textile on the trade route between Rome and the Middle East. When Lydia opened her heart to God, she also opened her home to Paul and opened the spread of the Good News to the continent of Europe. When we open our hearts to God, we not only find peace but from the peace pours forth the love that reveals God's Good News in Christ to the world.

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