

# New Kilpatrick

Podcast

20th June 2021

Acts 16:9-15

## Welcome

Hello! Thanks for the invitation to journey alongside each other today. I hope you have had a good week. Last week, when I was recording the video, I was sitting outside with the bird feeder in the distance over my shoulder unaware that there was a magpie eating all the food. Magpies are bullies: if anyone has any idea how to stop them doing that, let me know.

It's one of these things that happens a lot in our garden. You focus on one part, unaware of what is happening elsewhere. We tend to gravitate to one area when we have our social distancing circle of friends, and from the corner of your eye, sometimes you notice something going on in another part, where most of the squirrels, or the deer, or fox spend their time.

It is how we live as humans. We gravitate towards what is familiar. Safety is found in what we know. Perhaps we read bible stories in the same way, gravitate towards the familiar, their well known interpretation. But there are stories, we know about, but don't tell very often. The book of Acts is generally full of them and we've been retelling them over the last few weeks. There are stories within stories, stories about ourselves, that shift our focus away from the familiar, and so today we travel to the city of Philippi and meet there the saints of God, whose names are vaguely familiar but their stories perhaps not quite so.

## Prayer

Loving God  
Breadth of love  
And depth of hope  
We gather here  
In love's name  
For it is how we have been shaped  
And what we are called to be  
And we give thanks  
For the generations of followers  
Who have spoken of  
And lived by  
Such love

And we will do so here now  
Again and again  
For our souls know her calling

Our spirits hear her voice  
And we know a place called home  
That is broad in its welcome  
And deep in its grace  
And all we belong  
Each one of us  
Carrying as we do too much pain  
And hold onto too much hurt  
And so we seek to unburden  
To be forgiven  
For what we have or haven't done  
Said or left unsaid

(Pause)

Loving God  
In the grace that forgives  
And the love that heals  
We meet you  
And each other  
Seek renewal from you  
And from one another  
Confess to you  
And to one another  
And seek a new beginning from you  
And each other  
A healing place  
A renewing place  
A loving place

Hear us  
As we say the global prayer together

Our Father, who is in heaven,  
Hallowed by your name;  
Your kingdom come;  
Your will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For yours is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever.  
Amen

## The story of Purple

The colour purple, as we know, is an expensive colour and begins its life from a small sea snail which are milked for the secretion, or crushed from the snail. This was a big industry in the city of Thyatira, a city that had many business guilds. Indeed Thyatira had more guilds than any other contemporary city and among inscriptions one relating to the guild of goers has been found. The water of the area was so well adapted for dyeing, there was no other place that could produce the red-purple cloth out of which fezzes were so brightly and permanently dyed.

The blue-purple shade was equally as important and the city was known internationally for its purple cloth worn by blue-purple nobility and emperors red-purple. It is also a city on the edge of present Turkey, looking west towards Greece and the Europe. It is here we tell a story.

### Reading Acts 16:9-15

**9** During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." **10** When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

**11** We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, **12** and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district[a] of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. **13** On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. **14** A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. **15** When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.

### Reflection

Beneath the well known stories, are other stories... they have grown less in the telling... for they have been told less... They are more earthy... more grounded... They feel different... Such stores aren't told as often, and indeed, too many miss them altogether...

These lesser stories... and their characters... often clash with the way things have become, the way we expect things to be, and work out. They even question some of the principles we have built things on...

There is such a story in Acts, a character we feel we have heard of... perhaps... but none of us could really retell their story... and the subtle details escape us completely... yet they hold open a door on a whole new perspective, that asks us to question and reassess our presumptions...

Quite an introduction, no?... This is the story of Lydia... the woman in purple... It was a rare colour for a rare woman, a business woman, who had become a widow but taken over her husband's business... and bought and sold the most expensive of cloth that only royalty and emperors could wear... and Lydia...

Lydia was festooned from head to toe in a plethora of shades of the colour... but that wasn't why she was important...

She was wealthy, she had a status in the town, she was clearly known and was no easy pushover. I am quite sure it could be quite a business, negotiating deals and she clearly didn't give in easily, but that wasn't why she was important either.

She was listening to Paul by the harbour one day, and was convinced by his message, upon which she was baptised, along with her entire household. We hear of that a number of times in Acts, what the head of the household decides, everyone else follows. But that wasn't why she was important.

On being baptised, she opened her home to the apostle, she offered hospitality, a place to belong, a community. There again, do you see, those characteristics of resurrection: You met new life, resurrected life is a place of hospitality, in a place of belonging, in a place of community: there you find Jesus among you. Here it is again: we really need to remember these characteristics: it is on these we build the church. But that isn't why Lydia is important either...

Lydia's importance is found by that river, where she is listening to Paul, This flows into Europe, she looks in that direction, she sees beyond, and in Lydia, we find Europe's first convert.

Now that may not be as shattering as we might have wished it to be. But think about it: this continent we are part of, whether we voted BREXIT or not, the first Christian convert, the one to open her door to the faith, the one to let the light of Christianity shine, was this woman Lydia.

In these first days, here is a story beneath too many other stories that crowds it out, of a woman, who was the first recorded European convert, a woman who was one of the first leaders of a Christian congregation. Paul had no issue with this. Prejudice would eventually win and still holds the upper hand in so many ways, as it is sadly professed with genuine conviction by some as divine order.

But stories such as Lydia's challenge us and serve as corrective for us, enlighten and expose us, these stories clear the ground of our prejudices, and are waiting to be told by us and for us, in the years to come as we grow into what we will be. Such stories call

us into the future, without putting anyone down because of gender, or cultural status, or local bias, or institutional prejudice.

These lesser known stories are stories to tell, to proclaim, to light our way. And while we, generally perhaps, believe we don't have this inbuilt bias, the truth is always otherwise. It is a story that comes out of the vague mists to remind us, people outside our gate, outside our fringe of social acceptance, people unfamiliar, who are not traditionally given a voice, or a place in our life here, whom we do not yet know, are often most open to Good News, have the greatest power to shift us, and broaden us, and enrich us. We can be so familiar with our own ways, yet Lydia, the first to invite Christianity into Europe, our heritage, reminds us of a gospel opened because of hospitality, of seeing beyond ourselves, and made known in sharing, and living, the resurrected life.

## **Music**

### **Postcards**

The early church began looking outward across a continent, and all the cultures this new version of the faith would encounter and be changed by as it changed others, engaging with and being challenged by others.

Without trying to dumb this down, it may be a wee reminder to send postcards from wherever you end up this year on holiday, even if it is just down the road. It is a symbolic gesture that reminds us we are one family, we stretch beyond our local area, we are a global family, and those who live here, well, we bring back to this place the experiences of our wider family, the diversity of the faith, and are all valuable.

But more than that, this summer we offer a new project, involving postcards. Our Community team are inviting us all to write a postcard that simply starts "Dear Friend" followed by a few words of hope and encouragement, and that we are thinking of each other. Send them to us and we will then send them round our parish and community including local residential homes, thus keeping in contact especially with those least able. We hope to be able to send over 550 postcards. More information is in the bulletin and on the website. Postcards can be from anywhere, local, or postcards you've never used, tucked in a drawer somewhere, it is the thoughts that genuinely do count.

In such a way, we create community, share the breadth of our living beyond ourselves, becoming more aware of the breadth of who we are, the depth of who we long to be.

## **Prayer**

Creating God

Beyond our own circles we pray

Looking outwards beyond the familiar we pray

Aware of a vast world and many cultures we pray

And in the context of being in the world  
And in the truth we are all one humanity  
And in the challenge that we are all each other's brothers and sisters  
Our prayers feel different  
As we pray for our wider family  
Global and local  
Pray expecting justice for those who are our neighbours  
In whatever part of the world we find ourselves

For leaders of the richest countries  
To find moral policies towards the rest  
That we do not lose our humanity  
In tackling pandemics and justice

That we are seen to reprioritise priorities  
And in doing so we don't forget to prioritise the least

That we are aware we can shift the focus of our world  
Or we can choose not to  
And we each have a voice to be heard

That we can live our prayers in the world  
Leave the words lying in our pews  
And take the tasks into our neighbourhoods and communities

So that the poorest in Brazil's favelas hear us  
Those in Gaza, Syria, Yemen, Mali hear us

And those most local to us  
Our families and our friends  
Those who need our support here  
Who are unwell, physically  
Distressed, mentally  
Who are worried about jobs and education and welfare, hear us

Loving God  
How big a world we pray for  
Too much to handle  
To sort  
But may we live here  
Our prayers  
In this place  
This local family  
Always with an eye beyond ourselves  
And be your people  
Of hope  
Of Justice

Of Truth  
So be it  
Amen

## **Benediction**

May we go now  
And live beyond ourselves  
In love's name

And the grace

## **News**

Thanks to Pat for reading today. Life continues online at [nkchurch.org.uk](http://nkchurch.org.uk) though things are slowing up a little for the summer, the summer where I'm sitting outting the garden in the rain!

However we still offer some activities to keep ourselves busy and connected. More details about the postcard project in the bulletin which you can download from the website or have emailed to you: subscribe on the front page of the website. There are details there too to find out more.

We are also heading towards COP26 and we are creating four windows in the hall to recognise this, one window a month. For July we are creating a 'beginnings' themed window, and would like to display a few dinosaurs. In fact we invite you to create your own dinosaur. I'm off to create a roddysaurus but you can do your own, and post it into us, or email. Or you can use the templates in the bulletin and website to colour in a dinosaur and send on to us. If you have grandchildren somewhere in the world, or you are connecting with us from somewhere furth of us, then please do send in your more exotic versions. It is going to be fabulous.

So lots to keep busy. Please continue to be careful and safe and we'll see you next time. Take care everyone.