

7/12/26

7th Sunday after Pentecost

For Group Meetings from July 5th – July 11th

OUR MISSION: As a missional congregation we *celebrate* Christ's presence, *invite* people into a growing relationship with Jesus, and *equip* them to *serve* in a broken world.

Prayer of the Day: Gracious God, in the darkest moments, you bring freedom and hope. As you strengthened Paul the Apostle and Silas in prison, strengthen us in our trials, free us from all that binds us, and fill us with trust in your saving grace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING TOGETHER:

Share: How did last week's scripture (Acts 15:1-21) work in your life this week?

Mission:

- What was most satisfying about your ministry last week?
- Where do you see God at work?
- How did you participate in God's missional activity?
- How did inviting go last Sunday?

Hear: Acts 16:16-34

Explore Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. Who are the main characters in this story, and what roles do they play?
2. What leads to Paul and Silas being arrested and beaten?
3. What question does the jailer ask after the earthquake?

Connect Questions: (Use these or develop your own.)

1. When have you experienced hope during a "midnight" season of your life?
2. Paul and Silas sang hymns in prison. What practices help you stay connected to God when life feels hard?
3. What songs of faith have sustained you in difficult seasons?

Memorize this verse: "They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house." (Acts 16:32) Who has spoken a word of hope to you recently?

BIBLICAL EQUIPPING APART:

Obey: During this week follow through on your intentions.

Meditate: Meditate on Psalm 107:10-16. How does this speak into your life?

Reflect: What have I learned in my week of living with this text? What can I share with my group when we next meet?

Notes for ChristCare leaders:

This text doesn't begin with triumph. A young, enslaved woman keeps shouting truth, but it's a truth that profits her owners more than it serves her freedom. When Paul finally names the spirit that possesses her and she is released, we might expect gratitude all around. Instead, we get backlash. Because liberation, it turns out, is rarely a private good. It unsettles systems. It threatens income streams. It exposes how invested we are in certain forms of captivity. So Paul and Silas are dragged into the public square, accused, beaten, and thrown into prison. And here's where the story could have turned into a familiar tale of endurance and grit. But instead, the author of Acts lingers on something strangely ordinary and yet deeply subversive: they are praying and singing hymns at midnight. Not bargaining. Not strategizing. Not plotting escape. Singing. It's worth wondering what kind of faith sings in a place like that. Not a faith that denies pain, but one that refuses to let pain have the final word. In that prison, worship is not escape. It is resistance. A refusal to concede that the cell is the truest thing about them.

And then the earth moves. The doors open. The chains fall. But notice: the most important moment may not be the earthquake itself. It's what happens next. Because everyone stays. That detail resists our expectations. Freedom is available, but no one rushes for it. Which suggests that something deeper than physical confinement has already begun to break open. And then the focus shifts to the jailer. He wakes up in panic, ready to fall on his sword because he assumes failure means death. In a world built on honor, shame, and strict accountability, that response makes perfect sense. But Paul cries out, "Do not harm yourself. We are all here." And suddenly the jailer asks the most honest question in the whole passage: "What must I do to be saved?" It's not a theological exam question. It's a question born of rupture. The systems he trusted have collapsed. The prison he controlled is undone. Even the prisoners he guarded refuse to act like prisoners. Something new is happening, and he doesn't have language for it yet. "Believe in the Lord Jesus," they say. But what does that mean here as lived reality?

In this story, belief looks like hospitality. It looks like tending wounds. It looks like washing bruises that you may have helped inflict. It looks like a meal shared in the middle of the night. Salvation is not an idea here; it is embodied reconciliation. And by morning, the world has shifted in a small subtle way. One household has been remade. The power of this story is not only that God opens prison doors. It is that God refuses to be confined by them. And maybe even more unsettling: God keeps showing up in the very places we assume are God-forsaken, turning jail cells into sanctuaries and enemies into hosts. Which raises a question that lingers beyond the text: Where are the places we assume are closed, finished, locked tight. Only to discover that God is already there, already singing, already setting something free we thought could not move?

Thanks be to God,

Pastor Thadd (tbook@desertcross.org)

Traditional version:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power,
And the glory, forever and ever. Amen

Contemporary version:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those
Who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours,
Now and forever. Amen