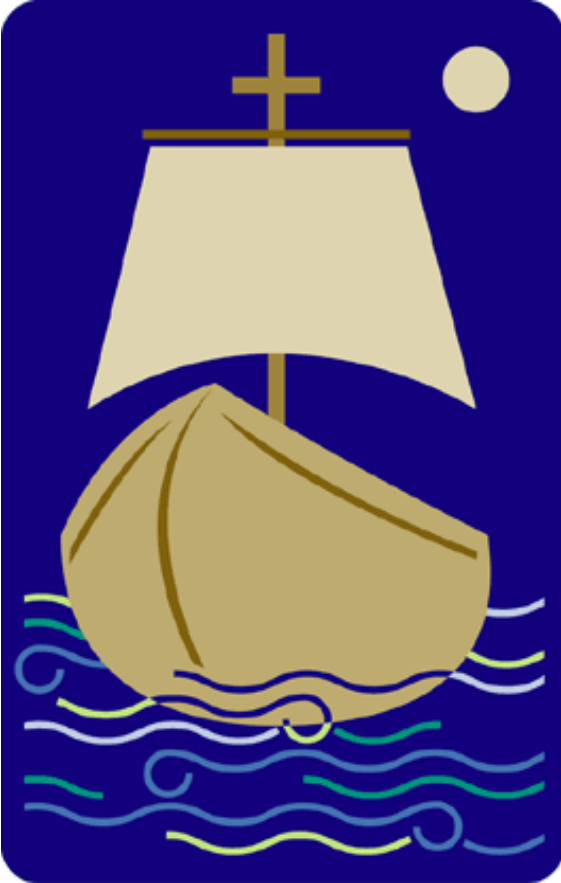


GODSPEED

Dr. Fred Fourie ~ Sunday, March 12, 2006



ACTS 16:9-15

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." 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. We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. 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. 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. 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.

One of President Reagan's favorite stories is the one about the minister's son who was taken out camping one day. His companion warned him not to stray too far from the campfire because the woods were full of wild beasts of all kinds. The young boy had every intention, really, of following that advice but inevitably, he was drawn by curiosity and wandered farther and farther from the fire. Suddenly, he found himself face to face with a very large and powerful looking bear. He saw no means of escape, and seeing the bear advance rather menacingly towards him, the minister's son did what he had been taught to do. He knelt down to pray for deliverance. He closed his eyes tightly, but opened them a few moments later and was delighted to see that the bear was also kneeling in prayer right in front of him. He said, "Oh, bear, isn't this wonderful! Here we are with such different view points and such different lives and such different perceptions of life and we're both praying to the same Lord!" The bear said evenly, "Son, I don't know about you, but I'm saying grace."

Well, of course, it is a silly story – but it does illustrate that there are many misconceptions and misunderstanding about what prayer really is and does. Our scripture tells about one of the Apostle Paul's journeys into the unknown. When we think of the apostle Paul, we usually envision someone spiritually on fire, stomping about establishing churches, making daring escapes from the authorities, or boldly witnessing even from the confines of jail. But the report of Paul's travels that we just read begins by depicting an almost stalled-out Paul -- one who knows he must get moving, but isn't at all sure which way to go. Before this he wanted to head into Asia, but his plans did not work out. Then he wanted to go to a place called Bithynia, which was an ancient region of Turkey. Once again, his plans

backfired. Paul and his companions appear to be on the verge of traveling in circles when the Bible says that he finally **had a vision** of a man of **Macedonia** pleading with him to come over to Macedonia and help them. Well they went and finally met, not a man, but a woman, called **LYDIA**. She was a rich dealer in purple cloth. A good woman, who believed in God, but probably never heard of Jesus. Paul convinced her to accept his message and to believe in Jesus. She was baptized into the fledgling Christian faith and then convinced Paul and his companions to stay in her home ... and the rest is history! You may ask, "**What history?**" Well, you just heard how the Gospel of Jesus Christ reached Europe for the first time. It is a **short** record of Europe's first Christian convert and **powerful** in the lessons it teaches. From Europe, the Gospel finally reached America! If it were not for **Paul's discussion with Lydia**, we would probably not be in this Church today. Paul appeared directionless to others, but, one thing is sure, he was in constant touch with his primary navigator. **Paul's spirit remained open to God's guidance. Paul's soul was acutely attuned to the frequencies of the Spirit.** Wherever his journeys took him, he was never out-of-touch with God's purposes and plans.

The brilliant English philosopher John Stuart Mill grew up in a home with a father who declared that religious learning was unnecessary and distracting. Therefore, he kept any religious instruction away from his brilliant son. Although John Stuart Mill flourished in his academic studies, he later looked back on his youth and realized that **a profound sense of lostness and longing** had pervaded his heart. Although his mind was crammed with information, John Stuart Mill declared his soul was "starved." **Without the directional guidance of a God personally known through prayer and faith, Mill likened himself to "a well equipped ship, but with no sail."**

Is it the effortless appearance of sailing that commands our fascination and constitutes sailing's appeal? **When a proper sail is hoisted, ships seem to magically move across the water, propelled by a great invisible, unquenchable power.** That is the kind of sailing John Stuart Mill yearned for with his starved and shriveled soul.

That is the kind of sailing Paul practiced and knew so well --even when he still had no clear picture of his destination. The bible told us what good time Paul and his companions made when they finally set their sails in the dream-inspired direction of Macedonia. **Paul had the winds of God's spirit in his life because he had the sail of his life set to catch that wind. Because Paul was convinced that God wanted him in Macedonia, he changed course and set his sail direction Macedonia.** As a direct result of this journey, the message of Jesus Christ reached the vast continent, Europe and spread from there to the Americas and the ends of the world.

Is your spiritual speed and direction truly based on communication with God through Jesus Christ? **No, it is NOT spiritual jargon.** Our personal response to this age-old question still determines our spiritual direction and makes a vital difference, every day of our modern lives. **Without the fully opened sails of communication with God, we will constantly find ourselves drifting and floating in open water.**

I believe that most of us still come here to worship because we do desire to be faithful followers of Jesus Christ. **Most of us come because we are willing to change course, to rechart the direction of our lives, if God would only tell us what to do.** Sadly, most of us do not have the kind of dramatic conversations with God that Paul is reporting. If God would speak that clearly to us, we think we would get up and get busy.

Well, God often visits us, but most of the times we are not in! Here is the secret!

Are you willing to change course, even rechart the direction of your life, if the Spirit suddenly blows you in a new, unexpected direction? Well, you can remain prayerfully in touch with the winds of God's Spirit, and fill your sails with the breath of the Holy Spirit. Then you and I will no longer "say a prayer" or "stay in prayer" but our lives will actually become a prayer?

Earlier this year we started our Church's journey with the **Quo Vadis, Domine** Question. Where are you heading Lord? We want to follow! **Clever question! But, how do you follow?** The term "Godspeed" will help answering that important question. In our language, when you want to wish someone a real successful journey, you wish him or her **GODSPEED**. Paul and his companions' successful journey to Macedonia gave birth to the term **GODSPEED**. When the sail of your life is set to do God's will, when you desire to follow Jesus and embark on a Spiritual Journey to discern God's will for your life, **a successful journey with positive spiritual results will follow!**

Today, seventeen women and men stood up and professed their faith in Jesus Christ in the midst of this Congregation. So we wish every one of you **GODSPEED** as from this very day!

For all who came here today because they are seeking new direction for their lives and want to hear God's message? Would you like to be able to take off and go sailing this very day?

Friend, here is the answer and my prayer for you!

GODSPEED

AMEN.

