

Theology Tuesday for Sunday, October 18, 2020
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture: Acts 16: 16-34

This week in our weird stories of the Bible series, we continue in the Book of Acts, taking a look at one of Paul's journeys. There is so much weird stuff happening in this text that it is hard to focus on just one thing. In this story, we get a girl who is possessed by a spirit of divination. We also get Paul calling out this spirit from the girl, not because he is trying to help and free the girl, but because he is annoyed that the girl keeps following him around, shouting, "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation." This is weird because the girl is not wrong. Paul IS proclaiming to the people a way of salvation.. so why is he annoyed with the help the girl is giving to him?

Then we learn that Paul and Silas are arrested, not because they were proclaiming the Gospel, but because they had angered the owners of the girl, now that she could no longer earn money from her gift. (That's a whole separate sermon in itself.)

And on top of all the weirdness in this text, there is an earthquake which shakes the foundations of the prison, leaving the doors thrown open wide and the people's chains to fall off AND NO ONE LEAVES the prison. Everyone remains!

Yet even in the midst of all the weirdness of this text, we are told that Paul shares the Gospel message. He made a connection. He shared the Kingdom of God with others.

"Luke [tells this story as a way to] offer [Paul and Silas] as models for the readers for how we can serve God's will and how God can use us as vessels of divine grace even when we are dire straits." As I have lived with this text, I get the feeling that it sums up our year of 2020. Things are changing so fast. Each new incident brings another weirdness. Yet, each day, each moment is an opportunity for us to discover the Kingdom of God in our midst, to share the good news of God's grace and love with others, to remember that no matter how weird life may get, God is always there in the process, calling us to embrace the possibilities of new in our midst.

So my question for you this week is: When did your life take a weird or unexpected turn yet it becomes an opportunity for you, or for others to experience the Kingdom of God in your midst?