

April 29, 2020 Devotion

“Every-ready People”

Let us pray: By Your word, O God, Your creation sprang forth, and we were given the breath of life. By Your word, eternal God, death is overcome, Christ is raised from the tomb. May we boldly proclaim this good news, by the words of our mouths and the deeds of our lives, rejoicing always in Your powerful presence, through Jesus Christ our risen Lord. Amen

Acts 17:1-9

17 When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,” he said. ⁴Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did many God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women.

⁵But other Jews were jealous, so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace; formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.^[a] ⁶But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, ⁷and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.” ⁸When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. ⁹Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5

1 Paul, Silas^[a] and Timothy,

To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

Grace and peace to you.

²We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. ³We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴For we know, brothers and sisters^(b) loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake.

The world was turned upside down, Paul and Silas traveled together and in chapter 17 in Acts, they are in Thessalonica. Paul was the missionary who went out to nearby countries telling people about Jesus.

For three Sabbath days Paul "reasoned with the people in the synagogue using the scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer." Some were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as well as some Greeks and a few prominent women. The "Jews" are still jealous. They just will not give up. Jealous, they start a riot, and Jason and others who hosted Paul and Silas were arrested and had to pay a bond. Everyone and everything were turned upside down. The message of Jesus tends to do that does it not. I know it turned my life upside down, in a good way!

The people in power, governments and religious leaders were afraid of losing their power. They were blinded by their jealousy and lack of understanding. How could this religious movement based on this man called Jesus, how could it spread all over the world? Paul and the other apostles kept on going, no matter what happened because they knew in their hearts who Jesus is, they knew what Jesus did: lived, died and rose from the grave, they knew why Jesus did these three things, so they and we could live eternally.

So, Paul and Silas are in Thessalonica and we look at 1 Thessalonians, chapter 1 and the first five verses. In true Pauline fashion Paul begins his letter with lots of elaborate words, too much for me in the past, until recently! Paul traveled a lot, he planted churches, got them up and running with well-trained leaders and then moved on to the next city to do the same thing. Along the way Paul spent time in jail where he continued teaching

about Jesus; he wrote letters to the churches he had planted, letters of encouragement and sometimes when needed letters of discipline.

As a pastor I now have a new respect for Paul and the letters he wrote. He was not able to see the congregations for long periods of time; I know why Paul used the over the top words I used to roll my eyes at! Paul used those words because they came from his heart, because he loved and missed the people in the churches. I miss each of you that way.

Grace and Peace to you!

I give thanks to God for all of you, mentioning you in my prayers each day. I remember that even in the short time I have physically been here, I have come to know how strong your faith is, how willing you are to share your faith in many ways. I am inspired by each of you! Through your prayers, phone calls, dropping off cookies, and so many more things you are demonstrating God's love for all, especially in this time of concern. We do not know when we will be physically together, but we are joined through the power of the Holy Spirit and that will keep us strong! Your faith, love and perseverance show others what it means to be a Christian. "They'll Know We Are Christians By Our Love" is a great hymn and it describes St Andrew's Presbyterian Church! We may not be able to physically walk hand in hand or side by side at this moment but will be able to at some point in the future. Your faith is "every-ready", you keep on going! I am thankful for you and I send my love to each of you. Amen

May the love of the holy triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, abide with us forever. Bless the Lord. The Lord's name be praised. Amen