



First United Methodist Church of Hanford

Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors.



505 N. Redington Street Hanford, CA93230
559-584-4075 (voice) 559-584-5438 (fax)

office@fumchanford.org www.fumchanford.org Facebook: @ HanfordFirstUMC

Are we looking for God looking for us?

On the Sabbath, we left the city and went down along the river where we had heard there was to be a prayer meeting. We took our place with the women who had gathered there and talked with them. One woman, Lydia, was from Thyatira and a dealer in expensive textiles, known to be a God-fearing woman. As she listened with intensity to what was being said, the Master gave her a trusting heart—and she believed! After she was baptized, along with everyone in her household, she said in a surge of hospitality, “If you’re confident that I’m in this with you and believe in the Master truly, come home with me and be my guests.” We hesitated, but she wouldn’t take no for an answer. Acts 16:13-15 (MSG)

Right there in those three verses, the good news of Jesus, crossed into Europe - by way of and through the heart of a woman! Paul and the apostles were given a base of operation for the work of the church in one of the most strategic Roman colonies in history. It could literally go out anywhere from there! Not only that, look at what else happened.

Lydia was not originally from Philippi. She was from the region Thyrtira (thigh-ya-tie-rah), in the province called Lydia, in the country of Asia Minor. The area of Lydia had five large cities: Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Thyatira (thigh-ya-tie-rah), all located on or near the chief rivers and connected with coastal cities by well-traveled roads. She would have had connections all along those major routes, why? She was a business woman who made and sold fine purple cloth and textiles, a skill only certain women from a certain area knew how to do.

It just gets better. When God does more, it’s way more! The Lydian market, as it was called, had enjoyed for generations a wide and valuable trade throughout the Graeco-Roman world. This woman evidently was so closely allied with her old province of Lydia, that her personal name reflected her connection to the place and the people.

Lydia believed in the God of the Jewish people even though she was not Jewish and she was living in an area where people believed in and worshiped Greek gods, and practiced Roman culture. She knew there had to be more to her faith than following the Old Testament Law and Jewish

ways. She wanted more out of her life and her purpose. She wanted to find her place in the work of this God she was putting her faith in.

Paul wanted more for work he and the other apostles were doing; more for the spread of the good news. He knew God was calling him to take the good news of Jesus that so radically changed his life to people far and wide. The power and presence of the Holy Spirit brought it all together so that the good news of Jesus reached more people than even Paul could imagine.

Lydia found her place in using her contacts, experience, connections, resources, and knowledge to be the first European convert to Christianity - And her home became the first meeting place of the first church in Europe located in the city of Philippi!

Could it be that because Lydia was looking for God looking for her that she found her place in God's mission? We are told she believed, became baptized, her and all her household. Then think about how far reaching the possibilities were from there because of the location of Philippi and Lydia's business contacts / connections; roads and trade routes went in every direction from that starting point. She found her place because she was praying, seeking, and opening herself to the possibility that God was seeking her and indeed came to know that God would use her to impact the spread of the good news across the known world.

Finding our place in God's mission is about listening, watching, and waiting for more. It is about seeking more out of our faith and ourselves. It is about knowing that God's "more" is far greater than ours if we but seek and trust it. It is about looking for God looking for us and then trusting God to use who we are and what we have.

I wonder how God is using us to reveal God's self - God's love, mercy, kindness, and forgiveness to those around us, to those who need it most. I wonder, are we looking for God looking for us?

Let us pray: God, help us to look. Help us to listen. Help us to find our place in you and then have the courage to stay there to do, be, give, serve, and share the love of Jesus. Amen.

Now I can say I Live a Day" (John Wesley)

Pastor Pablo

May 19th, 2021