

Christ Presbyterian Church

Edina, Minnesota

April 24 & 25, 2010

John Crosby

Meditation after the Children's Musical

Acts 15:35-16:40

Just as the children's program finished with, "I believe! Do you believe?" this little kid over here says, "I believe!" – that made the whole thing worth it! The whole thing is worth it if one little one or one older one says, "I get it now. I believe!" Can I just say parenthetically that if they had had Sunday school class like this when I was their age, I wouldn't have cut nearly as much as I did. The musical presentation was terrific! We're glad you were able to join us for the journey.

I was joking about the idea of coming all the way back from Indonesia in 33 hours and five flights, suffering in coach the whole way, but that *is* a joke, isn't it? I mean, just think of it. The first missionary who went on the journey to Indonesia that the kids just talked about took over him 13 months. His wife died two weeks after he got there. The European missionaries would often pack for these long trips not in suitcases or even in the big trunks. They would put their belongings into coffins and go on missionary trips and stay there for the rest of their lives. Only their bodies would come back because the journey would last a lifetime. They were following the example of Paul, Timothy, and Titus. The Apostle Paul had that kind of a life. Luke writes about it.

In Corinth Paul says this, "I've constantly been on the move, in peril from rivers and bandits in all countries. Five times I received 39 lashes. Three times I was beaten. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked. Once I spent a whole day and night out in the open sea. It's been constant danger." Then Paul said, "Don't feel sorry for me." He felt like it was a privilege to go everywhere and to tell the same story everywhere that he went because he said, "Everybody heard it differently."

Everyone was changed by the story but everyone heard it differently. You saw that in what the kids acted out. Some of them heard it like some of *you* do. Some of you are like Lydia, remember the dealer in purple cloth? Lydia is a church lady. She grew up in church. She knew all the right stories. Though she had never been able to connect her religion to the story of God in Jesus when she heard it, it all made sense. It wasn't just being a good church girl or guy or kid or adult any more. It was about following Jesus.

Lydia heard the message differently than the way the slave girl heard it. The slave girl had her

life set free. Those chains weren't just on Paul and Timothy. Chains were also on the slave girl. Some of you have been in slavery like that slave girl, whether it's to something you did in your past or an addiction – maybe your addiction is to drugs or to work or to money. Whatever it is, it holds you down. You want to change but you cannot change and the message comes to you and says, "You can't be changed but you can be rescued. You can be freed." That's what Paul says the Lord Jesus offered to them.

So Lydia heard it differently than the slave girl and they both heard it differently than the jailer. Some of you have lives very much like the jailer. The jailer is not a bad guy. The jailer is a good guy doing his job when all of a sudden his life gets turned upside down because the report says, "Yes, it's cancer." The boss says, "Yes, you're fired." The friend says, "No, I don't like you any more." Your spouse says, "The marriage is over." Or you get to the end and you say, "Is this what it was all about?" At that point the jailer cries, "Who can help me here? What will save me?" And Paul was there. Paul was there like friends are there to say, "Hey, don't kill yourself. Don't do anything bad. God is here for you. God sent me *here* for you!"

The same story. We all hear it differently because we are all at different parts of the same story. What are you hearing? If you have heard the message, "I believe!" and you believe it, with whom are you sharing it? How are they receiving it?

We started the day with the kids getting up and talking about a journey that changed our lives. We're going to end the service by introducing you to another group of people who are going on a trip that is going to change *their* lives, this new mission adventure in Zambia. Next Friday a group of 12 from CPC – staff, elders, and lay folks – are going to go to Zambia to see what it is that we think God wants us to be doing there.

We have asked them to come here today so that we could pray for them. If you are a member of the Zambia mission trip team, would you come forward and stand on the steps. Then, those of you who have been outside of the country on a mission trip, please come up and just stand here on the floor so you can lay hands on these folks and pray for them.

It's the same experience the kids were just singing about. God wants to give us a message to take all the way around the world and all the way across the street. It changes them and it changes us as well. How cool is this that our founding pastor Roger Anderson is here and is going to lay hands on them, too! We'll ask the team members to kneel. Those standing please put your hands on them. We're not very charismatic here, you don't see us raising our hands, but would you mind just stretching out your hand toward them.

Let's pray.

Lord Jesus Christ, Paul, Timothy, Silas, and Luke all prayed to You about where they should go next and You sent them out. The kids in the commitment class have been praying about where You would have them grow and You have shown them. These friends right here have prayed that You would give them a message of Your love and compassion and hope to share and You are sending them out around the world. We pray that You will keep them safe on their travels; that You will bind them close to each other in heart; that You will give them energy not just to talk but energy to listen, to encourage, and to pray with and for those they meet on the journey. While we hope and pray that

You will keep them safe while they are there, we pray that they will return to us *changed people* because of what You have done with them and through them. Bless them, bless us through them, and let others hear the story. Let others hear the story of the only great God there is. The God who sends us to the ends of the earth and brings us back to Himself. Bless them, Lord Jesus. And all God's children said....Amen.

The nature of oral presentations makes them less precise than written materials; any lack of attribution is unintentional, and we wish to credit all those who have contributed to this sermon. Soli Deo Gloria.