

Acts 16:9-15  
“Signs of Easter”  
3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter

April 26, 2020  
Our Redeemer Lutheran Church  
Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ –

[*Introduction*] Signs, signs... signs everywhere!  
“Entrance only.”  
“One way.”  
“Limit 1.”

Those are the signs we now see at the grocery store.

And what about the signs in our church?

“You are entering the mission field.”

“You belong here.”

For Easter we put out this sign. [*show sign*]

We’ve taken down that sign, and the world is thinking Easter is over.

But the reality is that Easter is never over.

Christ is Risen! He is Risen, Indeed! Alleluia!

Signs, signs... signs everywhere!

People are always looking for signs...

“She agreed to go on a date. Does she love me?”

“The fever is gone. Is he getting better?”

“They called for another interview. Will I get the job?”

We are always looking for signs.

And You see... God’s Word is filled with signs,

Easter signs,

and today we see them in a woman named Lydia.

[*Lydia*]

We read: “*And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods*” (vv 13–14).

Signs, signs... signs everywhere!

Here are a couple signs.

We get a couple of signs that tell us about this woman, Lydia.

We learn that Lydia was from the city of Thyatira.

Thyatira is a small city in Asia Minor.

So, she is far ... far from home, here in Philippi.

And Lydia... She was a dealer in purple goods.

Purple cloth was costly.

Costly because it was so difficult and time consuming to make.

So purple cloth was primarily purchased by the nobility.

These are signs that tell us that Lydia was probably a billionaire businesswoman —

Well, at least she had some wealth.

Are these signs of Easter? Certainly not.

The color is all wrong. Purple is for Lent.

But seriously, there's no hint of the resurrection.

The text also says that Lydia was “a worshiper of God” (v 14).

Paul went to the river because

he knew the people would worship by the river, by the living water.

“Worshiper of God” is a term that was often used

as a sign for Gentiles who believed in the Jewish God.

They believed in God, *YET* they were not believers in Christ.

[*Easter Power*]

Then the text says:

***“The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul”*** (v 14).

Now, we don't know what Paul said,

but he certainly shared the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

It would include what we confess in the Creed.

Because Paul knew — that when he was asked what he believed,

He responded and said, “I believe...”

The creed would be his message.

Oh, not word for word, but thought for thought.

He would have said...

Jesus had died on the cross for her

and of the victory of Easter

and life for all who believe.

And with God's divine work,  
she paid attention! She heard! Her heart was opened!  
But that's not all!  
Notice she didn't waste any time getting baptized  
along with the members of her household.

It was surely a sign!  
In Lydia's Baptism,  
she was united in Christ's death *and* resurrection (Rom 6:3–5).  
Faith was there. Salvation was hers.

AND It didn't stop there.  
Faith produced fruit.  
She begged Paul to allow her to host the missionaries in her home:  
***"If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord,  
come to my house and stay,"*** she said (v 15).  
And then the text says, ***"She prevailed upon us."***

AND that even later  
we see Paul returning to stay with Lydia  
—who was obviously an active member of the church now.

What we see in Lydia is just how powerful the message of Easter is  
— it brings life and salvation!  
Signs, signs... signs everywhere! We see the signs!  
We see an open heart that hears the Word  
and receives the gifts from Word and Baptism to create faith.  
Then we see evidence of that faith in good works  
—the hospitality she offers to Paul and his companions.

God calls. God opens hearts. God creates faith, and God empowers for service.

These are the signs of Easter,  
and these marks are the work of the Holy Spirit as we confess in the catechism:  
***"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my  
Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel,  
enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith"***  
(explanation of the Second Article).

***[Easter Power for Us]***

Lydia was a miracle of God's wondrous love  
and proof positive that the effects of Easter linger on.  
But let's not stop with Lydia.

You, too, are a sign, a sign of life, a sign that Easter goes on living,  
living in hearts and voices.

Maybe right now, though, you don't feel like much of a sign.  
Maybe the effect of Easter left you long ago.

This would be the work of the devil himself.

He aims to steal your victory and lead you to despair.

If possible, his goal is to turn your eyes from the empty tomb  
and turn them inward to yourself and your worldly desires.

## LOOK TO JESUS

For every Sunday is an Easter celebration

Because every Sunday we celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

Christ died and rose for you!

God prepares hearts through Confession and Absolution.

Forgiveness is received.

Hearts are made ready

for the proclamation of God's Word,

and the Holy Spirit works

in this Word to build faith.

It happens each and every Sunday

despite Satan's attempt to mislead and distract us.

Like Lydia, our hearts are opened,

and through the power of the Spirit, faith is strengthened.

And then, too, as with Lydia, faith produces fruit:

hands that serve, voices that proclaim,

arms that comfort and provide,

and legs that take us where we need to be.

The Gospel of Christ crucified and risen has this effect.

The victory of the empty grave lives on and on and on.

## [*Conclusion*]

Clearly, there is no way to silence the effect of Easter.

It goes on because Jesus lives, and because he lives, we live also.

Jesus lives, and, as he lives, it is still appropriate to say:

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleulia!

And with Easter we see .... Signs, signs... signs everywhere! Amen.

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As followers of Christ, "Keep loving one another earnestly

And show hospitality to one another without grumbling." AMEN! (1 Pt 4:8-9)

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