

Opening to Possibility

Acts 16:9-15, John 14:23-27

Stanford Memorial Church, May 5, 2013

Wilma J. Reichard

Both of the stories we heard this morning are about being open to possibility. Paul is open to the possibility of going in a new direction. Lydia is open to the possibility of praying with people of another faith or even to the possibility of being in a new community of faith, and Jesus promises us that with the Holy Spirit there is the possibility of peace.

Each of these are seemingly “impossible” in our current world. We see so many examples of people who can not or will not consider a new direction or a new way of thinking or who cannot come together with others unlike themselves or who believe a way toward peace is impossible.

Do you know what “possible” means?

Another way that Lydia teaches us what is possible is she shows that hospitality is possible even with total strangers, as she invites Paul and his friends to come to her house to stay.

The word for hospitality in Greek is philoxenia. It comes from two words...philas which means “love” and xenia which means “stranger”. In Hebrew scripture we are invited to love our neighbor only once, but we are called 36 times to love the stranger. I believe that today we too like Lydia and her household will witness baptisms and this can lead us to hospitality or kindness to strangers. The Dalai Lama said: Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible.”

Baptism is the sacrament of belonging or possibility. It is a reminder that we are called by name and blessed by the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus and his way of peace and love.

Now I would like for you to help me teach these smart people how to spell. Most of them use spell check so often they are probably like me and cannot spell on their own.

I will need some volunteers.

(Then have some children take the letters to spell IMPOSSIBLE).

This is what the world teaches... but our God is still speaking and says instead POSSIBLE (have volunteers I and M sit down).

Audrey Hepburn once said “Nothing is impossible, the word itself says “I’m POSSIBLE.” (Have volunteers I and M stand back up).

Today as we witness these baptisms, may we each remember we are Possible and rededicate ourselves to peace, love, kindness, compassion, hospitality and our brother Jesus. Amen.