

Lydia's Baptism (wear purple:)

Acts 16:13-15 by Patty Friesen (July 22/18)

We are in the second half of Acts where the Holy Spirit is coming to many Gentiles after the first Gentile Cornelius. Lydia's conversion and baptism is a literary parallel to Cornelius. Luke the writer of Acts is known for his highlighting women in his Gospel of Luke and here in Acts, he highlights Lydia of Thyratira, a Greek cloth dealer from a city known for its' purple cloth, the colour of royalty, the rich and famous, as some of us are who are wearing purple today. Lydia is introduced without a husband and not in her home but is introduced by her business. This is a rare and refreshing insight into a self-sufficient, independent business woman. It's like she's the Coco Chanel of the first century world.

Lydia meets regularly with other women at a place of prayer by the river near the city of Philippi. There may be no synagogue in Roman Philippi or these women are finding their way to God in a place of natural beauty. They are already worshippers of God and apparently Paul has worshipped with them there before. I like to envision Lydia and the women gathered in silence listening to the river flowing by and the wind in the trees. In the modern city of Philippi, Greece, there is a special place by the river where people are currently baptized like Lydia was. It is a very feminine place and when I was on my Apostle Paul tour with TourMagination there, we women from the tour sat by the water and sang, *As I Went Down to the River to Pray*. It was a powerful place of prayer. It's no surprise that God opened Lydia's heart there and she and her whole household was baptized, symbolizing their desire to follow Jesus. Then she opened her home doors to Paul and Silas, just as God opened her heart doors. God is the active

agent here opening Lydia's heart even as God opens the prison doors that hold Paul and Silas later in chapter 16. It is a chapter of opening doors of all kinds.

We rejoice in God opening Katherine's heart and Katherine being open to baptism this morning. She's our home girl - been with us since birth and would always be a part of us even without baptism. But this public ritual shows her union with God as well as with us and we rejoice in this union. When we deacons met with Katherine about her faith journey, she said she felt close to God by the river where she likes to go fishing with her dad and where her Grandpa Penner's ashes are buried. We thought we might try a river baptism today but this space is also sacred to Katherine and we do have baptismal water from the South Saskatchewan River. There are no tadpoles in it.

I'll invite Katherine forward to share a bit...