

**Lydia**  
**Easter 6 May 1, 2016**  
**The Rev. Deacon Lisa Kirby**

Our Gospel this morning takes us back to the last supper and is a portion of what is known as Jesus' farewell address where he speaks about the advocate, the paraclete, the spirit who will come in his place.

We will talk about the Holy Spirit a lot in the coming weeks as we move toward Pentecost and Trinity Sunday. But this morning I am drawn to the Acts story of Lydia—Paul's first female Christian convert in Europe; I think she is an interesting character but let me let her tell you about it.

"I heard you reading about me this morning and I thought perhaps I should tell you a bit more. You see, Luke was not into descriptive details and although, you know me as Lydia, that is actually the place where I was born.

I knew from an early age that I did not want some man telling me how to live my life. Creating fabric dyes was strictly a woman's role and the men stayed away, thinking it was beneath them. This was a place where I could work independently and I amassed a large fortune.

My mother taught me about the murex snail shells, which though quite small and ordinary looking, could be crushed to release one of the components of the richest dyes. This non-descript creature produced dyes much more valuable than an equal amount of gold. It took 60,000 of them to produce 2 oz. of dye. I experimented and came up with a unique way to produce the richest of purple dyes—fit for the garments of a king---royal purple, indeed.

I was a God believer, and some of us women used to go sit under the trees by the river to meditate and pray. One day some very ordinary looking men, whom we did not know, came and asked to sit and pray with us.

Though I believed in God I had never heard of a man whom some called the son of God and a God himself. This man Paul told us a remarkable story about this man who had died, but still lived. He had met a dead man who lived on in the hearts of his believers.

I certainly couldn't make perfect sense of it, but I knew this was something special. These ordinary men, no more special than the simple murex shells from which I made my dyes, these ordinary men had discovered something way more precious than gold.

These ordinary men introduced me to Jesus Christ. I committed my life from an early age to not leaning on any man, but when Paul introduced me to Jesus, I found how wrong my attitude had been. Jesus knew my heart, Jesus opened up my heart. I always knew I was missing something in my life---I always held God in awe and majesty, and here I knew I was encountering my God face to face in the spirit of the one who was called the Christ.

Perhaps I had always been seeking this man, not wanting to know another man until I knew Jesus. I always had an inner longing, a hungering for God that constantly led me to this place of prayer by the river, where I opened my heart to this man Jesus and to Paul, the bearer of his words, who became my teacher.

I shared the news with my household and we were all baptized. I opened my heart and my home to Paul and his friend Silas and to the church they began there under my roof. I was afraid much of the time, especially when Paul and Silas were arrested, but I didn't let my fear stop me. I trusted Jesus too much.

I, probably much like you, began a journey with Christ that was inward, but inevitably it led outward to the world, especially to all the hungry souls who didn't even know they had been hungry until they knew Jesus.

I have told you of my journey and I hear you are on this journey too. Where are you on it? Are you still at a riverside somewhere, with a hungry heart, a thirsty soul. The answer lives within all of us.

Look around, we are all ordinary people but we have inside of us, just like the murex snails, something more precious than gold—the love of Christ.

With whom will you share your journey? It wasn't, and shouldn't be, about forcing faith on others, Is there someone who awaits at a river somewhere and needs to hear your story? Who will you bring to know the living Christ?

I thank you for your time and I wish you many blessings on your journey and on all those with whom you share the priceless gift of Jesus Christ."

Amen

*Some material excerpted from a sermon by Casey Collins*