

Chain Breaker

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Hey, Ms. Jesse, I'm on staff here at Christ Church, and I'll be the scripture reading, do the scripture reading for today.

It's from Acts chapter 16, verses 16 through 34. And I know you just sat down, but let's rise for the scripture reading. Thanks. Acts 16, starting at verse 16.

Once, when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.

She followed Paul and the rest of us shouting, These men are servants of the Most High God who are telling you the way to be saved. She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her.

[1 : 21] At that moment, the spirit left her. When her owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

They brought them before the magistrates and said, These men are Jews and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice. The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods.

After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly, there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken.

At once, all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.

[2 : 28] But Paul shouted, Don't harm yourself. We are all here. The jailer called for lights, rushed in, and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

They replied, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household. Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. At that hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds.

Then immediately, he and all his household were baptized. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them. He was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God, he and his whole household.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Thanks for that reading, Jesse. Again, I'm going to introduce Christine to come up here.

There are a lot of things I could tell you about Christine, where she's from, what she does for Foster the Bay. But the thing that stands out to me the most is just her love for Jesus and her love for her neighbors.

[3 : 30] Oftentimes, in our meetings with Christine doing Foster the Bay type things, she'll have to stop herself and say, I'm sorry, I just started to preach. But everyone else in the meeting is like, no, just keep going, keep going.

So we're going to get some of that right now. Will you welcome Christine up as she comes to bring God's word to us? Peace. Thank you, Pastor Andrew. Well, good morning, Christ Church.

It's really good to be with you this morning. I've actually been really looking forward to this since Pastor Andrew invited me to be here and to actually have a privilege of weaving this study that we're continuing in through Acts with this message really around Foster the Bay.

And like Pastor Andrew said, this is actually the last Foster the Bay vision cast that I'll ever be doing because Foster the Bay is becoming Foster the City. What's happened is that churches like you joining this coalition across the Bay area has made such an impact across our community that we're seeing churches from other regions wanting to engage and wanting to bring this into the other regions.

And so this Thursday, we're becoming Foster the City, and we're going to be launching in Southern California. So we are now Foster the City, and we're the Bay area. There were 155 churches, including Christ Church.

[4 : 46] I have a special place in my heart for this church because this church is the birthplace of Project Peace. And any church that has Micah 6-8 on your landing page is a church I want to be a part of, that we would be people who act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

And Jen McKillips and I are allies together in this work across the Bay area on behalf of some of the most vulnerable populations. And so I'm really privileged to be here too. And Shea Gilbert is another warrior, powerhouse warrior, that has been a big instrument in bringing Foster the Bay to this church.

So I'm really glad to be here with you this morning. Well, like I mentioned, we're going to be in Acts 16 this morning as we continue this journey. Pastor Jonathan last week said that this is our summer reading.

Are you reading Acts on the beach this summer? Good for you. You guys are so spiritual. But that's, he said that's the summer reading. I really like that idea actually.

And the question that he posed is, what kind of church does God want us to be? What kind of church does God want us to be? And I would like to suggest that God is inviting us to be a church empowered and led by the Spirit, joining him in his restorative work within our community.

[6 : 02] Imagine what it would be like if every person sitting in this room would be literally led by the Spirit every morning. That as we wake up and we begin our day, we listen for what the Spirit is saying to us and how he wants us to move on behalf of the people in our sphere of influence.

Imagine the ripple effect of the power of Jesus through his Spirit in our community. I believe that is what he pictures for the church. Specifically this morning, we're going to see that when God is on the move through his people, the chains of bondage and oppression are broken by the power of the Spirit of Jesus.

We see the disciples invited to be conduits. And just like disciples, we are invited to be conduits of the power of God. You see this in the theme verse of Acts, right? In chapter 1, verse 8, it says, But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

And here we are at the ends of the earth. The power, this power, this power of the Spirit shows up in a variety of incredible ways because our God is very creative.

It's very surprising following the Spirit. Have you experienced that? Following the Spirit is a wild adventure.

[7 : 28] He surprises us again and again. And he does this all throughout the book of Acts. When I was reading Acts for preparation this morning, I just kept seeing how surprising he was in the way that he moved again and again.

And that's how he continues to move, in jaw-dropping ways. I love what N.T. Wright suggests. He says, That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is all about.

And that is what we are about. But we get to colonize this place where we live with the life of heaven, empowered by the Spirit in the name of Jesus, doing the work that only he can do when we say, Yes, yes, use me as that conduit.

We see this happening all through the book of Acts. Glimpses of heaven on earth. And you'll hear me kind of coming back to that. What does heaven on earth look like? Jesus invites his people.

Jesus invites you to bring a taste of his kingdom wherever you go. Remember those Baskin and Robbins little pink spoons?

[8 : 45] Did you ever have? I love those. And there was no limit. You could have like ten. I love that picture. That we would be so much more than that. But that our encounters with people in our community and in our world would be like a taste of heaven.

Is that how people feel when you walk in the room? Jesus wants to break every chain that binds you. He wants to set you free.

And then he invites you to be a part of the beautiful, redemptive work he's doing in this world. And honestly, I believe that we experience increasing freedom through Jesus when we join him in his work in the world.

Partnering with him in what he's doing is healing for us. I really encourage you to check that out in Isaiah 58. You will see how we can actually step into a whole level of healing ourselves when we engage with the most marginalized and vulnerable in our communities.

Jesus invites us to be a church led by the voice of the Spirit. You see that all through acts. The Spirit told them to do this. The Spirit said, don't go over there. The Spirit empowered them to do this.

[9 : 52] The Spirit set this person free. The Spirit raised this person from the dead. They were completely empowered by the Spirit. And that is what we get the same Spirit. We have the same Spirit living in us.

And we get to move in the power of the Spirit across this Bay Area. How exciting is that? That is the reason to get up out of bed this morning. So we pick up the story of Paul as he and his companions had been led by the Holy Spirit to Europe.

Here they are in Philippi, which is actually modern-day Greece. And there were not very many Jews in this particular community. And so there was no synagogue there.

And so what they would do is they would meet by the river. Followers of God would meet by the river on the Sabbath. They would discuss the Hebrew Scriptures there. And this is where Paul would go to share Jesus.

The completion, the fullness of the Hebrew Scriptures. So we see this in Acts 16, 13. It says there when Paul meets Lydia. On the Sabbath, we went outside the city gate to the river where we expected to find a place of prayer.

[10:54] We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. So you see, this is kind of the place that they would show up and share Jesus. All right, so while they're kind of proclaiming Jesus through the city, the slave girl shows up.

She's following Paul. She's very likely possessed by what was known as a python spirit, connected to the temple, the local temple of Delphi, known for sorcery where people would worship gods that would be able to predict the future.

Who does not want to know the future? This is still super popular in our day and age, right? Tell me what's going to happen. I want to know the future. Right? And so these guys were making all kinds of money, pimping this girl out, selling her and her gift for their own financial gain.

And power. You see, power and money always tied, right, with oppressors. She was vulnerable and these men found her and they took advantage of her for their own financial gain.

She was shadowing. It's kind of interesting. I heard kind of Jesse kind of like giggle while he was reading that part where it's like Paul's annoyed. Like what is going on here? She was shadowing them and crying out behind them, these men are servants of the most high God.

[12:10] They're telling you the way to be saved. She's actually speaking the truth, right? She's speaking the truth. The spirit inside of her, it knows that this is truth. And so she's following.

And I wonder if she was drawn to them because she knew that around them she could be set free. I don't know. Why was she drawn to them? Why did she keep following them? Why did she keep proclaiming this truth? It's so interesting that this slave girl is literally proclaiming deliverance through these men.

In verse 16, or excuse me, verse 18, we see Paul annoyed and agitated. I'm not sure why he didn't address it sooner. Why did he wait a few days? I don't know. But it gets to the point where she is so disruptive that he confronts her.

I think it's really important to remember, when I was reading this, I thought to myself, man, when we are around people that are enslaved to any number of things, our fight is not with them.

Ephesians 6.12 says, for we are not fighting against flesh and blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities, powers and principalities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

[13:18] It's real easy to make enemies out of everyone, but we need to remember who the real enemy is. Here we see, again, as is evident throughout all of Acts, the power in the name of Jesus.

The power in the name of Jesus. Paul is calling on the authority of Jesus over this demonic spirit, and the spirit obeys Paul and comes out of this precious slave girl in an instant.

I remember learning about the power of the name of Jesus when I was a little girl, and I would have bad dreams in the middle of the night, and I would bolt to my mama's bedroom, and she'd snuggle up with me for a little bit, and then she'd walk me back to my room, and she'd say, Christy, whenever you're afraid, just say the name of Jesus out loud, and his presence will be with you, and darkness will flee.

The enemy hates the name of Jesus, so just say the name of Jesus. That provided me great comfort as a little girl to speak the name of Jesus when I was scared. There is power, and there is power, in the name of Jesus.

Because when we call on his name, we're calling on his character, his works, his reputation, his resurrection power. We're calling on everything that he is. We're saying we need you to come and invade this space with your power and your love and your life and your hope and your restoration.

[14 : 48] And this girl, her chains, are gone. These chains that bind her, the demonic spirit, heaven has touched earth, and when heaven invades earth, chains fall off, and people are set free.

And the powers that be, the ones who benefit from people being oppressed and enslaved, well, they get very angry. They get very, very angry.

And when we step into the stories of the most vulnerable, you will find yourself up against oppressors that maybe you never experienced before. When you begin to identify yourself with the most marginalized.

In verse 19 through 21, you see this. Evidently, the people of Philippi are fine with Paul and Silas until they start messing with their money, right? And the power that came with that money.

And so, these guys falsely accuse Paul and Silas. They tell them, you know, in 19 through 21, you can see those false lies that they tell against them. They want to make them suffer for messing with their business venture.

[15 : 53] Because like I said, when the gospel spreads, we see the dismantling of the power of oppressors. The gospel, when the true gospel spreads, the power of oppressors is dismantled by the power of the spirit through the name of Jesus.

And as spirit-filled followers of Jesus, we are invited to be part of the restoration stories that God wants to write.

Not because we're so great, because just like Pastor Andrew said, we have been rescued, and therefore we point others to the rescuer. We have been set free, and so we point to the one who sets us free.

We have been given bread, and so we share bread. This is not about us being some kind of hero. This is about us sharing what God has been given to us and we can extend it to anyone in our sphere of influence who has open hands.

I wanted to take a moment just to consider who are some of the most oppressed people within our community. I would suggest that kids who find themselves in foster care are among the most vulnerable.

[16 : 59] In the lives of these children, we see the convergence of the chains of layers of brokenness, systemic brokenness, societal, familial, and individual. All this brokenness converged in the life of a child entering in foster care through no fault of their own.

The slave girl being used here in Acts while the first century feels like, oh, this is so far away from us, it's not really that far away. as there are girls enslaved within our community being sold and pimped out.

The reality is 60% of the kids rescued from a human trafficking ring a few years back. They were kids who spent time in foster care. Traffickers look for ways to insert themselves into environments with vulnerable children and manipulate them, promising them love and belonging.

Love and belonging is the most basic human need. And so when you can go to places where people don't have it and give them that false sense of belonging and love, I've seen this firsthand when a 17-year-old in our home was propositioned at a work program for foster youth by a 15-year-old kid in the same program.

He approached her and he said, you and I can make a lot of money together. Let's work together. She said, no thanks.

[18 : 33] And when I picked her up and she told me what had happened, she added, I might have said yes a year ago. Because she was in a safe and loving home, not a perfect home, but because she was in a safe and loving home with food and internet access and she was able to go to the high school that she really wanted to go to, she saw another path for herself.

But you've got oppressors sending in 15-year-old kids. She said, he was really cool about it. He was really cool about it. Of course he was. This is darkness disguised as light.

It's darkness disguised as love and belonging. The vulnerability of kids who age out of foster care is so incredibly intense.

My brothers and sisters, the outcomes for these kids who are never welcomed into safe and loving home, they're heartbreaking. Half of these kids who age out will develop a substance abuse problem. Half will be unemployed by the time they're 24.

A third will deal with homelessness. You look around and you wonder who that's suffering in our community was a former foster youth that we just couldn't find a place for.

[19 : 57] Three percent, only three percent of kids who age out of foster care without ever being welcomed into a loving, safe home, only three percent will graduate from college. But this is where we're invited to stay, not on my watch, not on my watch, not in my city, not if I have anything to do with it.

We can make a difference by welcoming these kids into our homes when they are most vulnerable and seeking to prevent these outcomes. Let's go upstream. Let's go upstream. I believe that in this room there are people that God is inviting into the lives of kids in foster care.

It's been said that when you have biological children, you get to co-create with God. And when you step into the life of a child in foster care, you have the privilege of co-redeeming with God. What story does he want to write in the life of that child, that teenager?

And this, I just want to tell you, this is not just for a small, oh, well, I'm not a young family. I'm an empty nester. Perfect! Empty nesters are perfect. I'm single. I've always wanted to be married and I've always wanted to have kids, but I've got to wait until my man comes.

No, you don't! It's so easy to talk ourselves out of doing hard things. And all I want to do is invite you to ask God what he is asking of you.

[21 : 18] So picking it up in verse 22, Paul and Silas are severely beaten and then immediately thrown into jail. According to the commentator J.B. Polhill, the author of Acts points out that their feet are placed in stocks because often such stocks were used as instruments of torture.

They had a number of holes for the legs which allowed for severe stretching of the torso and thus created excruciating pain. This is the context of them singing these hymns. Ironically, they are jailed for setting this slave girl free.

When you move in the power of the Spirit, when you move in the power of Jesus, it doesn't mean that all is going to be hunky-dory and beautiful in your life because you are stepping straight into the middle of brokenness and pain and chaos and into an empire that is anti-God.

And so you are going to expect to get some pushback when you step into these stories. God will be closer than ever because as we see in Matthew 28, he identifies with the most marginalized.

He says, when you do it for the least, you are doing it for me. So we see, we experience his presence there more than ever but it is hard. And here they are in this state, in these stalks, bloodied from being tortured and it says, at midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God and the other prisoners were listening to them.

[22 : 37] This verse alone is so powerful to me. I don't know if they were singing because they're like, it's okay, it's all good, let's sing in the middle of the storm or if they were singing as a defiant gesture of worship in the middle of the hard.

Here they are and I see the prisoners at the edge of their seats and it's like, what is happening with these guys? They're a complete bloody, tortured mess and here they are singing and I wonder what they were singing.

We have probably what they were singing in our psalms because that was their song book and these were Jewish boys that had been raised up as Jewish boys. I wonder if they were singing, the Lord is my shepherd, I will lack nothing.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil because you're with me. Surely your goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life or bless the Lord oh my soul, all my inmost being, bless his holy name.

What were they singing? Where can I go from your presence? Where can I flee from your spirit? Even if I go to the depths you are still with me. Their faith and joy in the midst of suffering is a beautiful picture of how heaven invades earth when the people of God experience his presence even in the most horrific moments.

[23 : 52] and I know that there are people in this room who can testify to the reality of the nearness of God when things are very, very dark. I know sometimes he's felt far too.

Sometimes he's felt very far. Paul and Silas seem to have the sense that their lives were in the hands of God. They may have had these physical constraints but their spirits were free and they seem to be at peace as we read further.

I just want to remind you this morning that God is with you. God is with you. God is for you. No matter what you're walking through he is there.

He is wanting to give you what you need sustaining you and guiding you and loving you and offering his healing to you. I love how Pastor Tyler Staten of Bridgetown's Church suggests that this story shows quote the power of worship when it's a choice not a feeling.

Remember that those jail cells flew open when Paul and Silas were singing in a prison at midnight when it was hard. Not when the band was playing their favorite song and there was caffeine coursing through their veins.

[24 : 59] Worship is powerful. It's a powerful way to push back the darkness and live into the truth and I've had that experience where all I'm just feeling discouraged and defeated and like just hopeless and I choose to step into worship whether through it's a gratitude practice or through music and you it's not like it fixes everything but there's some of that darkness lifts because we remember that God is with us in it.

I wonder what was going through the jailer's mind as he listened to their songs and saw their unbroken spirits. When heaven invades earth when Jesus' followers move in the power of the spirit suffering is transformed.

There's supernatural joy right in the middle of pain and it's this defiant joy. Gratitude is the pathway of joy in the midst of pain and then the earthquake and the chains come loose.

I read that living in Philippi was similar to living on the San Andreas Fault that there was earthquakes that would happen frequently there but this one was a biggie. The jailer knew that he was responsible and we saw this earlier in Acts that when Peter escaped all the jailers were killed and so this guy knows he's responsible these prisoners are going to go he's just going to he's going to off himself right there but Paul knew this and so he cried out we're still here!

We're not going anywhere! Paul knew that he was already free. No chains could bind him and he was more concerned about this jailer's life and soul than he was about his own physical freedom and I want to say that again.

[26 : 35] He was more concerned about this jailer's life and soul than he was about his own physical freedom. Paul knew that the person who was really in chains was the jailer. As Paul points out the miracle served not to deliver them but to deliver the jailer.

When heaven invades earth the people of God are more concerned for the souls of others the lives of others than they are for their own comfort and safety. This I believe is one of the greatest challenges of the American church our incredible addiction to our own safety and security and comfort.

This is the invitation into foster care. It's this willingness to get uncomfortable for the sake of a vulnerable child. James 1.27 is such a common verse used in this context. It says pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.

This passage is saying what we see throughout all the scriptures Old and New Testaments that the most pure expression of a true relationship with God is how we're engaging with the most vulnerable in our communities. How we're speaking up for those who can't speak for themselves.

What we're doing on behalf of the powerless the voiceless the marginalized and I know that among the most vulnerable and powerless are beloved children removed from their families because of abuse or neglect.

[28 : 06] Do you remember how Jesus felt about children? Remember when the disciples were like we don't have time for them and Jesus is like indignant it says. He was indignant. Let the children come to me.

This is what the kingdom is like. Can you imagine how Jesus would feel about the vulnerable children entering in foster care? how he must be saying my people you are my body.

You are the answer to the cries of these children. Just like in Exodus 2 I'm going off. In Exodus 2 when Moses when the people of Israel are chained in slavery in Egypt and they're crying out for their deliverance.

and it says their cries went up and God heard their groaning. What does God do in the very next chapter? Does he come down? No. He invites Moses.

He shows up in a burning bush after this guy was 40 years shepherding thinking his time was over. By the way he thought his time was over. No that's for other people. That's for the younger people.

[29 : 18] No no no no no. God said I have heard the cries of my people and I am sending you. You are the answer to the cries of the people in your community. They're saying God where are you?

And then God taps on you and sends you. The second half of this passage it says refusing to let the world corrupt us.

How does the world corrupt us? Perhaps more than anything the world's most enticing invitation is to seek my own comfort in every way to care for myself. This is my pleasure my satisfaction my it's my happiness it's my children it's my house it's my country it's my money mine mine mine mine like the seagulls in Finding Nemo but in the kingdom of God we belong to each other someone else's problem is our problem.

The way of Jesus invites us to lose our life that we might find it and he is with us every step of the way. The reality is our Bay Area communities are in crisis there are more children entering foster care right here in Alameda County than there are families to welcome them.

Do you know that 50% of the kids who enter are sent out of county they're displaced from their communities because there's not enough homes here for them. Kids from 0 to 21.

[30 : 38] Can you imagine being a teenager in Oakland removed from your home and you're moved to Merced? You lose your high school your community your friends your extended family the smells of your neighborhood on top of losing your biological family as broken as it is it's still your family the displacement of these kids is tragic and as followers of Jesus the invitation to love our neighbor is on the top of the list and we're sending our most vulnerable neighbors away saying we just can't do it this is not my problem I can't do it Foster the Bay is simply a coalition of churches including Christ Church that are committed to ending this crisis we want to see a waiting list of families instead of a waiting list of children if every church just a fraction of churches raised up one foster family and wrapped that family with the support of four support friends who took the journey with them in the context of the community we'd have more than enough families to meet the needs of these kids entering care we need a waiting list not just for the 0 to 2 we need a waiting list for the 15 year old for the 13 and 11 year old siblings can you imagine being taken from your parents and your sibling is placed in a different home than you are so that's the invitation into the restoration story that God wants to write in your life and the lives of kids in foster care there's two ways you can get involved one we need foster parents if you have a nudge at all if you have a nudge at all around these kids just take the next step this is a time in their life where they need someone who will say we're still here we're not going anywhere and I realize that this is a big ask to consider opening your home up to a kid in foster care but if not the resurrection people then who if not us then who stepping into these stories will be filled with unspeakable joy and heart-wrenching pain you're stepping straight into chaos and brokenness it's complicated and it's hard and it's beautiful and it will change you in ways you can't imagine let me tell you I used to think life was you did this and this and then you get this until I stepped into foster care and the messiness of what it means to be human and how different it is to be born into the family

I was born into the family of the child that we took when he was three and his mom had been trafficked at 16 from a bus stop by a Romeo pimp pretending to be her boyfriend within two months of meeting her she was out on international bull he brought her up from LA why why is that her path why do I get to be born into a family who from the day I'm born the day I'm conceived I'm celebrated and loved and everything is paid for and you can do anything what I have been given wow I am responsible to share what I have been given as many of us in this room are whatever we have we give the second role you could step into is that of a support friend who come around those foster families offering them tangible spiritual emotional support because foster parenting is challenging 50 to 60% of folks quit after the first year but we've seen this radically change when you have support the support of your church community committed to you not saying hey let me know if you need something that's amazing

I can never do that call me no that is not a support friend a support friend is someone who actually commits to showing up for you on a consistent long term regular basis support friends can be there for devoted prayer and encouragement on hard days they can be there to bring a meal to provide child care to help you fix up your home to get licensed to maybe do fix it and repairs to help with yard work to pay for your house to be clean knowing that you have this village around you when you're walking through such a hard story can make all the difference we've seen 90% of our families sustain beyond a year and foster the bay because of the support friend structure around these families that's powerful we're all called show up for vulnerable children within our community in some way the question is how so I'd like to just invite you to simply take the next step we have a table and our fantastic advocates

Sharon and Shay will be at the table and there's a card in the back over here in this community area and you can fill that out and we're going to have a meeting here at regeneration in Oakland on July 31st if you feel at all moved by what you've heard today at all wanting to hear a little bit more just take the next step I'm not going to drop a child in foster care off with you tomorrow this is the thing when God invites us into doing hard things we just jump to ten steps we think oh but I can't do this tomorrow well you don't have to do this tomorrow you just take the next step and then wait for God to show you the next step and then you take the next step and this is how it is with anything in life that God's speaking to you about this morning whether it's foster care or something else he's inviting you into you just take the next step don't worry about step ten he'll worry about that when you get there just do it right now so Paul's phrase we're still here kind of summing it up here every child is someone fighting for them much like that story that Jesus tells the prodigal son who's waiting this father is waiting at the door for his son to return

I'm still here right that's that posture I'm not going anywhere I will wait and I will be here always back to the last few verses of the text today the story ends with the jailer asking what must I do to be saved the faith of these men was so compelling the fact that they stayed instead of leaving their joy and their suffering their compassion for him when they could have left this is all just stunning and it captivates him and he wants what they have and so they invite him to believe in Jesus and be saved the miracle for the jailer was that these prisoners stayed put and this leads to immediate transformation in his own life he didn't care about their wounds until now and now he dresses them and feeds them cares for them and what's so beautiful is not just the jailer is set free but his whole family is swept up into the wonder of Jesus his whole household and they all believe and are baptized Jesus love embodied in you his people changes everything because when you live like this people are like what do you what are you doing and why people get to know and see

[37 : 42] Jesus reflected in you and I believe that when we are filled by the spirit that there are times when we walk into spaces and there is a light and there is a hope and there is a power that we hold and carry with us that people see and that draws them to Jesus and then let him do the heavy lifting we don't have to convince anyone of anything we live our lives embodied in the love of Jesus and trust him to do the work that he wants to do what does Jesus want to do in your life how is he drawing himself to how are you being drawn to him and invited to leave what's safe and comfortable to follow the powerful spirit wherever he leads Jesus he is the chain breaker he sets people free and then we get to be conduits of this chain breaking freedom that he wants to bring into the lives of the people in our community as you consider what it looks like to move in the power of the spirit wherever he leads

I just want to remind you of this poem of St. Teresa of Avila I'm going to close with this Christ has no body but yours no hands no feet on earth but yours yours are the eyes with which he looks compassion on this world yours are the feet with which he walks to do good yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world yours are the hands yours are the feet yours are the eyes you are his body Christ has no body now but yours so Jesus we give you our bodies right now we give you our hands our feet our hearts and our eyes love I pray that everyone in this room that is moved by compassion

I pray that their compassion would be embodied in actions in the world I pray that as we spend time studying your Bible that it would be metabolized into our world in the way that we live and move I pray that for anyone in this room who's feeling that they are in chains that are binding them in some way I pray that in Jesus name in the powerful name of Jesus that you would set them free and I pray that as we walk in freedom as you continue to keep setting us free that we would extend what you have given us to others Lord we give ourselves to you and I pray that anything that you're saying in this room I pray that every answer to you would be yes yes yes yes in Jesus name I pray amen