



## ENTER God's presence

**Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, Lord. They rejoice in your name all day long; they celebrate your righteousness. For you are their glory and strength**

- Psalm 89:15-17a

Lord God, in you we have strength and security. Help us now, as we gather around your word, to grow in our confidence and trust in you and your promises to us. By your Holy Spirit, make us bold in your word so that we might proclaim the good news of Jesus in all the world. Amen.



## SHARE life together

1. **How have you seen Jesus at work in your life this week in your highs and lows?**
2. **Share how you went with your living purposefully from last time?**
3. **What, if any, is the difference between bravery and boldness?**

"When one door closes, another opens." We've heard the saying. We know the meaning. But have you ever considered that a new door opening means a door closing for someone else. We see that paradox at work today. A door to freedom opening for the female slave shut closed the door of freedom to Paul and Silas. The earthquake which unlocked the doors of the prison and unshackled the chains that bound Paul and Silas would have closed the door on the jailor's life. Paul clearly understands that if the open door for him meant the closed door for the Philippian jailer, the door was really closed to both of them. So in an incredible bold act, Paul and Silas stayed, moving beyond individualistic wants, comforts and even freedom so that the light of Christ would boldly open the door of the heart to bring a freedom that transforms everything for everyone. Could the aftershocks of the Covid earthquake that has rocked our lives leading to closed doors and closed borders actually be the opportunity for bold acts that God is using to open someone's heart to real life and real freedom?

Week beginning  
Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Worship series:  
**Getting Our Acts Together**



### VERSE for the week

**"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"**

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household."

**Acts 16:30-31**



### REMEMBER this week

**Whenever we bring freedom to someone's life, we participate in a bold act of the Gospel.**



**LISTEN** attentively

**Read Acts 16:16-40**

- 5. What stands out for you in this text? What questions does it raise for you?**
- 6. What truth or principle would you be willing to go to prison for? Why?**
- 7. There are a number of acts in this passage which could be described as bold. Which one stands out to you as the boldest? Why?**

When something is bold it usually stands out. A bold choice is often a different choice compared to the popular or mainstream option. A bold font or typeface is usually used to make a word or phrase emphasised or to make a headline stand out on a page. In this passage from the book of Acts, Paul and Silas perform a number of bold acts; things that make them stand out from the crowd. While we see in their story that being marked or identified as different did not always lead to positive results for them, their bold acts of proclaiming the name of Jesus brought freedom and healing to many.

- 8. Have you ever felt like your faith in Jesus has identified you as different or made you stand out? What happened and how did it feel?**

When it comes to marketing or advertising, difference is usually a positive thing. Marketing gurus and advertising executives are paid huge sums of money to make sure that the unique qualities of their clients products are perceived to be different or distinct and certainly seen as better than their competitors. If a product has nothing unique or different to offer than other items already on the market, it usually is not very successful.

- 9. What are the unique or distinctive claims of Christianity compared to other religions in the world?**
- 10. Why do you think that more and more people are stepping away from the church? How do you think the church could be more bold in its witness to Jesus?**



**GROW** deeper

The first thing Paul and Silas do which makes them stand out is their interactions with the fortune teller. This spirit possessed woman identifies Paul and Silas as servants of the most high God, that's not a title many people went around proclaiming for themselves. Yet it was true to call them that. While Paul was a tent maker by trade, and well educated in the Jewish law, in most of his letters he introduces himself as an apostle (literally meaning a 'sent one') or as a servant of Christ. As a servant of Christ, Paul was always conscious of doing what his master, Christ, had for him to do. Although perhaps in this case, casting out the fortune telling spirit from this slave woman seems to have been more an act of frustration than of obedience. Regardless, Paul's assurance in his identity as a servant of Jesus allowed him to boldly declare freedom for this woman in Jesus name and to cast out the spirit.

- 11. What does being a servant of Christ mean to you?**
- 12. Have you ever witnessed a cruelty or injustice that has made you so mad or upset that you have just had to do something? What did you do?**

As a result of this bold act, Paul and Silas end up in prison. Yet even here, locked up because of their faith, they continue to sing praise to God and to pray while everyone around them is listening. Even imprisonment doesn't seem to have slowed down their bold enthusiasm for spreading the gospel. In fact, their imprisonment leads them to another opportunity to boldly witness to the life transforming grace and love of Jesus.

13. How would you react in Paul and Silas' situation if God caused an earthquake and opened up the doors and chains of your prison that would set you free?
14. Paul found himself imprisoned a number of times. In Colossians 4:3 he says, "And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains". It seems Paul learned to see these setbacks as opportunities to proclaim the gospel. How might the difficulties and setback that we face today be opportunities to boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus?



## **LIVE** purposefully

Sometimes we can be so focussed on our own situation that we fail to see the opportunity to meet the needs of others with the gospel of Jesus. In a world which is increasingly individualistic, the more we think about ourselves and our needs, the more we blend in with our world and our culture; the less unique and transformative our faith appears to the world around us. When we are firmly confident and assured of our identity in Christ though, we can be bold about proclaiming his good news to the world because the world holds nothing that we need to fear! Death is not the end for us. Imprisonment can still be an opportunity for the gospel, just like it was for Paul and Silas. But the world is not going to want to listen to what we have to say if our message doesn't make any difference. If we don't look any different or act any different than the rest of the world then why would people listen to the message that we have. The message of Jesus is the only thing that really makes a difference and has the power to bring new life and hope where there is none. How are you going to boldly stand out and proclaim it to the world?

15. Australia is a particularly difficult culture to stand out in, we love to cut down a tall poppy. How could you share your faith without sounding superior when speaking to others.
16. A favourite saying of many Lutheran pastors and seminary lecturers is, 'everything we do teaches.' What do the things you do teach others about your faith in Jesus?
17. What is one bold way you will share Jesus this week?



## **PRAY** intentionally

- Praise God for reconciling us to himself through Jesus.
- Ask God to help you grow in confidence and trust in his promises so that you may boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus.
- Continue to pray for those who feel trapped and isolated in Covid lockdown. Ask that this situation might be an opening door to an encounter with Jesus.



## **BLESS** one another

You might like to address one person in your group and make the sign of the cross in the air as you say...

**[Name], In Christ, you are free. Amen.**