

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." Acts 16:13-15 Open hearts and open home

Dear friends in Christ, its memorial day weekend - and as we remember those who gave their lives for their country it is also the beginning of summer. School is out and pools or lakes are open. Its a time to gather together as family as friends, to grill hot dogs and burgers, to swim, to just enjoy one another's company in the sun.

Unless we don't. And I don't mean if it is chilly or rainy. I mean if we don't like our neighbors or family, if we don't want to socialize, if our hearts are closed to them or theirs to us. And what can be a time for unity in celebrating and remembering can become a reminder of the disunity we deal with.

God knows about closed hearts. Paul, then Saul, had a closed heart, so closed against God that he breathed out threats against all those who trusted Christ, so closed he held the coats and approved of stoning the believer Stephen, so closed he went out of his way to Damascus to arrest all who followed Christ. That is a closed heart. Yet Jesus spoke a word to Paul, "Saul, Saul, Why do you persecute me?" And blind Saul, who had let his hard heart drive him on, was led into Damascus, and heard the word of God and his heart was opened. And he believed and was baptized.

His heart was so opened that he quit letting his desires lead him and went where Christ and where the spirit opened a way. And when the spirit opened a way in Macedonia, a way he did not seek but the spirit opened, he went. And not to a place where his heart would say to go, but to a roman colony, Philippi, where there wasn't even a synagogue. And he went to a place of prayer and there were not even any men there but women. A group reason might say is not the best one for him to connect with in this day of relational evangelism. Yet his heart is opened, and scripture is opened, and he gives the message the Jesus is the messiah who died for our forgiveness and rose to give us life.

And even from this stranger, a man with strange ideas, God's word opens hearts. Through the word, the spirit opened Lydia's heart. She trusted the lord and believed. She trusted his word and believed.

And open hearts lead to opened homes and opened lives. She and her whole household were baptized. She taught those she was close to - relational evangelism working well - or maybe we should just say she just taught those the spirit put her near too. But she taught her household and they believed and were baptized.

And the opened hearts didn't stop with just opening the house a bit. She opened her house to Paul and his companions, She supported his ministry, and

And for those who say women have no part in the ministry, she prevailed on Paul and his companions to get them to stay. She was not a wilting wall-flower, but helped spread the word by supporting word's preachers forcefully.

And so we remember Lydia, whose heart was opened, Lydia, a seller of purple cloth. Lydia from Thyatira. Lydia who is remembered still in the LWML as they also help those in need of cloth and raise household that know the lord and support those who preach the word.

But more than Lydia, we remember the spirit that opens hearts. If your heart is closed against God or against those made in his image, open his word. He sent His son to reconcile us to him and creation to him and in him all are reconciled. And his word offers words of life, Hear them here, and in devotions, and in bible class, so that they prevail and your hearts are opened by the Spirit and the word. And then let

the Spirit lead you. So many times we let our reason stand in the way. The kids are too young it says. But the spirit says teach your household. Reason says These people are strange to me and will not listen. But the spirit says share the word. Reason says these people are hardened, but the spirit says there are those who hear. Share his word that hearts may be opened.

Eat your burgers and swim if you can. But also say a prayer thanking the one who gives burgers and pools. Share remembrances of those who gave their lives for you but even more remember their faith and the one they trusted in. People give their lives only in hope and trust of something better. As our hearts are opened, we know that something better -and that someone better - our Lord. Our lives are not our own to lead where our hearts lead. They are given to the one who opened our hearts. Open your lives as he leads to share Him with others. Amen.