

## Always be ready

Bible reference for sermon 1 Peter 3:13-22, Acts 17:22-31

*<sup>15</sup> But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, <sup>16</sup> keeping a clear conscience,*

I received a delightful email this past week from a mum and grand mum and a child of God. She shared what was in the week ahead for her and I was in awe of her energy, wisdom, and love for her family.

One of the things I reflect on this Mother's Day is my experience is that Mums have been powerful evangelists. At the mid-week service, a number of people prayed thanks for their mums being this for them too. Not all are and I acknowledge the different stories we have. My mum was a natural evangelist for me. She would always be ready to share the reason she loved Jesus for he loved her first. She always seemed ready to share. Am I? are you?

On this Mother's Day, we're going to explore our call to share our gospel hope.

The mid chapters of the book of Acts in chapter 16 where Paul goes to Philippi and then on to Chapter 17 where Paul arrives in Athens, are some of my favourite in the Scriptures. For in them we listen to the story of the work of the Holy Spirit in establishing the church on European soil.



Philippi and Athens are some of my favourite places on earth to visit. And in Athens the humble site of the Areopagus today belies the magnitude of what the Spirit did through Paul there. I've been blessed to go to this site with mum evangelist Sue. If you go to Athens to climb the hill to the Acropolis you pass by (and can easily miss the rather underwhelming site where Areopagus stood and where today is a plaque in Greek with the words of Paul from Acts 17 that we hear today.

One of my joys in life was the opportunity to have been there; to read the plaque aloud in my rusty Greek; and to pray that I may be ready to share the reason I have sure hope in my life. That Jesus is my Lord, and he has saved me by his amazing grace on the cross and by his resurrection, and he wants all people to be saved and to know hope in their lives. Today I call you to consider the reason for the



hope you have in Jesus; to consider who you may be called to share this with, to pray for them and for you that you will be ready to share your hope.

Acts 16 tells the wonderful story of the gospel coming to Europe and the very first church on European soil. When we think of the church in Europe today, we might think of the Vatican, the cathedrals...

all grand and great. But also consider that the church as it started and it continues is also where Christians share the gospel. Where you are with the Word of God and with hope in your heart ready to share; there too is the Spirit of

God...the same Spirit we hear who established God's church on earth is ready to establish faith new hearts today.

In Acts 16 Paul and his companions come to Phillippi in modern day Greece: they then go to where the local people gather and they proclaim Jesus. In Acts 16: 14 we hear "A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul....she and her household were baptized" Lydia and her house...her household (and she may have been an evangelist mum) are the first Christians baptised in Europe. Here at the start of the great church in Europe, faith and hope begins in a house with a household/ a family.

Acts 16 and 17 tells the story continuing of the gospel going and the church growing, despite opposition. Paul and his companions come to a new place and engage the people. The story has 4 common aspects as Paul and his companions travel from Lydia's home church to Athens!

- 1. Paul goes to where people are and where they're at with the gospel.**
- 2. People ask Paul to tell them more. He does. Some people come to faith through the gift of the Holy Spirit and the church is planted.**
- 3. There is some opposition**
- 4. Despite opposition the church is established, and people are saved and the gospel is spread further.**

That's where we pick up this amazing story today in the cosmopolitan, hip centre of Athens. This where the philosophers and the latest in thinking hang out.

Paul comes and works with the people where they are. "I can see in every way you are very religious".



And then he goes on to proclaim Christ and him raised to life. He engages with them. He contextually proclaims Jesus to them. Some scoffed. Some ask him to come and tell them more and that **"some of them joined him and became believers."** And the church was planted.

So, what does all of this say to me?

To you?

To us today?

Let me suggest a couple of things:

The Spirit has come to you where you are. It may not have been Paul the apostle who's come to you. But when you were baptised; perhaps if you were rocked in the faith by parents as a little one, or as someone brought the love of Jesus to you in later life, it is the same Spirit who comes with the best love and grace and life that God can give in bringing faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul says to the Athenians "in him we live and move and have our being". In him we have our being and our life. In him, we are. In Jesus, we are! So, dear friends in Christ, be who you are. Grow in knowing Jesus for you. Grow in the living Word for you and be ready to share the reason for the hope you have.

**"In Jesus we are who we are made to be.  
So, lets grow to be who we are"**

In our second reading today in 1 Peter, we hear:

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.** But do this with gentleness and respect.

So, are you ready? Are you prepared to share the reason for your hope? Just a few minutes ago we sang together...

**Let the weak say I am strong  
Let the poor say I am rich  
Let the blind say I can see  
It's what the Lord has done in me.**

Are you prepared to share what the Lord has done in you? And if you want to practice, I would love to hear you.

Prepare with prayer. In Colossians 4 Paul asks for prayer “that God will open to us a door for the Word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ.”

**“We talk to God about people before we talk to people about God”**

**Who might you pray for to ask God to open the door, to open the opportunity to share the gospel?** I know my mum and many mums have prayed fervently for their kids to have faith and I know of Kids who pray for mums to know Jesus.

So, prepare. Next Sunday we begin a Gospel Fluency workshop which will run for 5 Sundays. Please, please pray for the workshop and the people who will grow in their ability to share the gospel through it

And be alert. Be ready to tell just like Paul in Phillipi, and in Athens and my mum in the vineyards of the Barossa...be ready in Melbourne, at your Mother’s Day lunch today, on the phone or wherever you are to share your heart, your love, your joy that Jesus is your Lord and Saviour. I know this might not come easily and like Paul, we too can face rejection. But the same Spirit who worked the same miracles of faith in Acts and in you is also at work in your life and through you. Be encouraged.



The closer I get to heaven, the more I see that it’s important not to let the important things remain unsaid and unshared. Time flies and becomes short so very quickly.

So, use it wisely. Prepare.

Be ready to share your hope in Jesus.

Say it as it is. Don’t let it be left unsaid. Always be ready to share the reason for the hope you have. Amen.

*Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul’s Lutheran Church YouTube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>*

*The sermon can also be listened to on our podcast, search for “St Paul’s Box Hill Podcast” on your preferred podcast app or access our Apple podcast here: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/st-pauls-box-hill-podcast/id1601585660>*