

Welcome To Lydia's House
July 2, 2023
Rev. Rogers Carrington BA, BD, Th.M.

Readings

Luke 4:16-20

He came to Nazareth where he had been reared. As he always did on the Sabbath, he went to the meeting place. When he stood up to read, he was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written, God's Spirit is on me; he's chosen me to preach the message of good news to the poor, sent me to announce pardon to prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to set the burdened and battered free, to announce, "This is God's year to act!" He rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the place was on him, intent.

John 16: 12-16

"I still have many things to tell you, but you can't handle them now. But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. He won't draw attention to himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said. He will honor me; he will take from me and deliver it to you. Everything the Father has is also mine. That is why I've said, 'He takes from me and delivers to you.' In a day or so you're not going to see me, but then in another day or so you will see me."

The following is what Rog prepared for posting on the website. It is not verbatim what he shared at the service, but is very similar.

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[Today] you will be transported to the home of Lydia, St. Paul's first convert in Macedonia. Here you will have first century "People of the Way" experiences. The invitation to join People of the Way came at a critical time. Jesus was gone, but said he would be back very shortly. To make sure everyone received and believed his message, his followers taught: "Believe Jesus died on the cross for your sins, has paid for them, has conquered death. The Holy Spirit will continue what Jesus taught you, then as one of his followers you will have eternal life." Joining People of the Way also meant you would minister to the poor as outlined in the Beatitudes.

For the last two thousand years we have been waiting for Jesus to return to finally judge who will go to heaven and who will go to hell. Even Paul was concerned that those who professed believing in Jesus were depending too heavily on saying the “right” words and not taking care of the poor. Over time, the emphasis began to change from worrying about one’s own salvation and using one’s belief as an “exit strategy” for salvation, to taking care of the poor and loving your enemy as the most powerful tool you have for building God’s community on earth.

Today People of the Way believe the way to bring about peace on earth is the same as what Jesus taught: “Love our enemies, build cooperative communities to take care of each other, and minister to the poor.” Doing this could help build a new middle class to increase America’s commitment to taking care of the needs of all people, not just those on top who are wealthy. To accomplish this we need a new understanding of what God intended us to know by Jesus being sacrificed on the cross. God is not a lawyer and doesn’t pay for the sins of the world by sacrificing something so valuable as his Son. Sacrifice in the history of religion is invented by humans. God rules and conquers death with love. Jesus died on the cross to make it clear to People of the Way that reclaiming earth and bringing peace to earth may cost one’s life, but forces of evil still need to be faced and conquered with love.

For sixty-five thousand years humans have been evolving toward God-consciousness so that God can offer all of us a new path. God has given us gifts of love, life and creativity to create what has never been created before. “And you shall do greater things than this.” Each of us has received these gifts and is asked by God to join Him in co-creating heaven on earth. It is the same choice we have always had with God. We can either accept His gifts and join Him in restoring earth, or we can take His gifts and use them only for ourselves. Our salvation is included in accepting God’s gifts and His offer to join Him. Yes, we will sin, but *sin* is a word taken from archery that means “to miss the mark.” Therefore, we need to take better aim and get on with the work! We learn, we grow, and with God’s help through the Holy Spirit we will bring about what we thought was impossible – peace on earth.

