

SUNDAY May 25, 2025 “Are You Waiting for the Spirit?”

Acts 16: 9-15 Revelation 21:10. 22 to 22:5 John 14: 23-29

Have you ever gone treasure hunting? That is followed a map that was supposed to lead you to treasure? Geocaching is a favourite pastime for many people searching for a specific spot with a hidden log book or treasure. Geocaching involves solving clues, using a GPS on one's phone and/or maps to discover a special hidden box of small items. It is now an international game and calls many people to travel around the world to search for the treasurers but also to explore places most people ignore. It is like a game of hide and seek but has no time limits and one can just enjoy the experience. But the idea behind it is to search for something even though you don't know what or where you'll find it!

There are many people who not into geocaching at all but still are searching. Searching for things misplaced, forgotten or items that were lost. It is always amazing when we find what was lost or just forgotten for a short term. Have you ever misplaced a favourite pen, a book, or even your car keys? What often occurs is that you then need to take time to search for it which you had not planned on doing or you are in a rush to go someplace. Once you slow down remember what you did before then you look for what is missing and find it. These are often the easier treasure hunts we have. But people today are looking for something- whether it is the best deal on a piece of clothing, or latest technology or even what the pirate story tells us might be hidden somewhere.

As people, we too often are searching and sometimes we are just uncertain what we are seeking. When Paul was starting to tell Jesus' story and establish churches and gathering places to teach out Jesus and learning and growing in faith he often did not know where to go or why. Our reading from Acts 15 tells us that it is was through a vision he received that he and his companions traveled into Macedonia. It was on the Sabbath day that they went outside the city gate where the river was hoping that there was a place of prayer. While there, they sat down and spoke to women who were there. One of the women was Lydia who was from Thyratira and was wealthy as she sold purple cloth. She worshiped God and it was she whom Paul was drawn to speak with even more. This woman wanted to learn more and Paul taught and in some manner he saw in her something like a yearning to know. And it was because she was seeking understanding and wisdom and Jesus. Lydia's heart was open to listen to the message and believe. Paul spoke to many people but it was Lydia's heart that lead Paul to fulfil the vision he had to go to Macedonia. For Lydia shared her belief in what Paul spoke about so much that she

and her household were baptized. She also urged Paul and his companions to stay with her. They did. And for several days they stayed and went to the place of prayer where they spoke about Jesus to Lydia and her household and her friends. Who was searching for what? Paul went to where Lydia was searching- she believed and worshiped God but there was something missing. Someone was needed. This was evident to Paul when he spoke about Jesus and this led to Lydia and her family being baptised.

What are you searching for? Throughout this season of Easter we have listened to questions about our relationship or possible relationship with Jesus. We wondered about whether we really could believe in Jesus as the Risen Christ without seeing him like Thomas stated he had to see to believe. We questioned whether we could follow the Good Shepherd taking the lead in our lives if we are to be his sheep and follow. And we also asked that if we are a sheep of Jesus, how can we love others when it is so difficult to do. How can we love others when so many people who say they do, don't live it, show or try and appear so unlike Him? These are big questions, just like the one shared today: Are you waiting for the Spirit?

Waiting for the Spirit is not like waiting for a bus or a train or a plane. The Spirit will come but unlike the bus, train or plane-- there is only one. But instead of waiting at the station or airport, the Spirit waits outside of you to enter your heart or life to give you peace. But only if the individual invites them in will the Spirit come in. Paul knew that there was a reason to go to the river by the city gate-- someone was searching. And he found her in Lydia who eventually shared her story of faith in God and was baptized because her heart was open to receive the Spirit.

So why must we wait? One of the reasons is because the Spirit will come when we least expect to act, and will come in different ways to different people. and the answers reflect our understanding or uncertainty of what we believe to be with regard to matters of faith and love which we receive from Jesus. The Spirit may come to you in a rush of a wind, or when you are quietly praying on your deck; when you feel the breeze off of a lake, or when you are stuck in Windsor traffic and you breathe in and out knowing that the Spirit is guiding you to be calm. The Spirit will come but we must wait.

As we read in John 14, Jesus promised that the Spirit would come. The Advocate will be sent in Jesus' name and will teach you everything and remind you of all that Jesus taught. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not

let your heart be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. He says, wait be patient. "I am going to my Father because the Father is greater than I."

And when will the Spirit come? In our Christian year, church year we celebrate the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost. Which for us in 2025 is June 8-- We'll learn more about what occurs that day but one will be reminded that when the Spirit of God descended upon the believers, this was when the church was begun and when we celebrate its birthday-- It is not just a coincidence that we will celebrate the 100th anniversary of The United Church of Canada next Sunday-- June 1 as a larger group of United Church people. But we will gather the following week June 8 and celebrate the birth of Christian churches everywhere- with Pentecost!

So as we have looked at some Big Questions of faith in this season of Easter, the answers are yours to make. Do you believe in the Risen Christ? Do you believe that Jesus died and rose again, for your sake? Are you a sheep who follows the Good Shepherd? And are you able to love others? The questions aren't easy to answer and perfection in doing all that they require is a huge task, but the reality is, we cannot do it or even attempt or try to do things alone. This is why the church and your church family are here. Because we are all trying to do our best and yes there will be times of disagreement, times of laughter and joy, as well as times when it is important to share and show the love we have for each other because God loves all of us. HE created us all and so we each strive to be what Christ teaches. This is why it is important to know that the love and joy we experience as a church family doesn't stop. The church family cares about you and your life on earth as you prepare for your eternal life with God. And as a church, we all seek a deeper relationship with God- Father, Son and Spirit. As disciples of Jesus we look to knowing and asking over again, what would Jesus do? And when we see others in need of support in its various forms, we seek justice and fairness. We are all the children of God and we are on this journey together- even though our journeys started at different times-- chronologically, and spiritually, we are on this journey together in this moment. And for this moment- it is because of love that we can say and show others that we care.

We are all people searching for a better life- not just economically getting by, but living the good life in Jesus Christ. Living life with purpose, with hope and the joy that God gives to all who believe and seek to know His ways of living. We therefore need each other- to help us in those moments when shadows seem to fall, when hurts abound, when physical pains seem strong, or even as we get older and need support. We need each other to celebrate the joy of growing up and older, of changes with children and grandchildren and the wonder of it all. And we need each other in Jesus to bind us as one for we are one in the Spirit. For when that day

comes we will be united as the river of life will lead us always and into eternity. This is the promise of God for all of God's faithful people. This is the hope of God's people- that we will experience the river of the water of life, we'll experience the tree of life and God's light will shine forever and God will reign. This is because of faith and opening one's heart to receive God's Spirit!

Let us pray

God this is our prayer. We offer our thanks to you! May your Spirit move amongst us in these quiet moments filled with hope. SILENCE> Thanks be to God! Amen.