

**“GAME CHANGER – PART II”**

**Pastor Mike Corwin**

TEXT: ACTS 16:9-15

GOD’S WORD: REVELATION 21:1-10 & 22:1-5

**I – REVELATION PROMISE:**

I told you last week that we would be continuing the sermon to this week. I told you that part of that would be looking deeper into the Revelation scripture we started. Last week you got 6 short verses. This morning you got a whole lot more. I want you to understand that it is a story of promise and hope.

God created the original heaven and earth to be perfect and to be our permanent home. But sin and death entered the world through us. Instead of a permanent place of perfection the creation became a place of rebellion and alienation towards God. A place where the words permanent and eternal became over shadowed by the word death. But our God is a loving God. A God who’s love is steadfast and never wavers. A God who worked and is working behind the scenes in Salvation history to liberate us from our bondage to sin, corruption, and death.

This is the God who revealed to John his Revelation of hope and promise. In this morning’s passage you heard read that God will set the creation back to perfection again. That he himself will create a new heaven and a new earth to replace the ones we broke. That he will not be a distant God but will live among us. He will be our God and we will be his people. In the new creation there will be no more death and sorrow because we have been forgiven and are no longer under the penalty of our sinfulness. There will be no more crying or pain. We will, no longer hurt and bad things will no longer be tolerated. He will wipe away our tears because even our bad memories that caused us tears will be wiped away to bother us no more. And he will do this for all time, not just a season.

And there will be no need for the news each night to tell us about the mayhem and evil that took place in the world because there will be no evil people among us. Evil will cease to exist as he casts it into the fiery lake of doom.

And this is all due to the work of the Lamb...the work of God’s Son, Jesus The Christ, on the Cross of Calvary. The game changer. God may have been working behind the scenes for a while but then one day in a stable in Bethlehem he stepped out of the shadows and started working where all could see and grasp this work of Salvation he had promised through the prophets.

**II – WHO IS WELCOME:**

So we come back to the question I asked last week, “Who is welcome?” Who did Jesus change the game

for? Who did he die for, who was he resurrected for, and who will he call to be a citizen of this new heaven and new earth?

How about those named in verse 8 of the passage from Revelation? How about the “cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshippers, and all liars?” And let’s add to this shall we...how about wife or child abusers? Thieves, addicts, drunks, greedy people, or animal abusers? Let’s not stop there...let’s get personal as we started to last week, how about women, or men, republicans or democrats, Muslims or Jews, Hindus or Buddhists, Catholic or Protestant. Black-white-red-green-or yellow skinned? Rich or poor. And we could add to this list all day based on our prejudices and biases.

But the answer is that anyone who comes to believe, who repents of their sins, and makes the Lamb their Lord and Savior are welcome to this new heaven and new earth. Period!

### **III – TEXT:**

Last week I shared with you a vision that Peter had which was a watermark in our Christian faith and how it then started to spread to the Gentiles and made advances into the Roman society itself.

This morning I want to share with you another story that was a turning point in spreading the Gospel to the outside world, those beyond just the Jewish people. This time it concerns a vision by the Apostle Paul. Because he listened to his vision the Gospel was taken Westward and ultimately to Europe and the Western world.

#### **Acts 16:9-15 (NLT)**

<sup>9</sup>That night Paul had a vision: A man from Macedonia in northern Greece was standing there, pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” <sup>10</sup>So we decided to leave for Macedonia at once, having concluded that God was calling us to preach the Good News there. <sup>11</sup>We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. <sup>12</sup>From there we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we stayed there several days. <sup>13</sup>On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. <sup>14</sup>One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. <sup>15</sup>She and her household were baptized, and she asked us to be her guests. “If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my home.” And she urged us until we agreed.

So Paul, like Peter, had a vision. His vision didn’t have a sheet full of unclean animals in it. His was of a man who was pleading with Paul to come to Macedonia and help them. Paul took this as a divine directive from

God to go and evangelize the people of that region. God's call on our lives is never a trivial thing and when we obey it great work is done and lives are changed as in the case with Peter listening and Paul listening.

So Paul and his traveling companions get on a boat and do as his vision commanded. They took the Gospel to the region of Macedonia and ended up in the city of Philippi. This was a Roman colony in the region of Macedonia. A Jewish Apostle surrounded by Gentiles once again!

And the Jews were outnumbered. They didn't even have enough people there to form a worshipping congregation. To do so, to start a synagogue you needed at least 10 men who were heads of household. Evidently there weren't that many. So on the Sabbath Paul and his companions walked outside the city towards the water. It was in these areas that people were allowed to gather in the open to pray since there was no synagogue. As they walked they happened upon a group of women who had gathered for informal worship of God. They were probably hoping for a Jewish man to come along and enlighten them about their Jewish faith and give them a blessing before he moved on. It had to be a man because women were not trusted with the scrolls and the words of God. Again, they were just property. They had no standing, even in the Jewish community, except to make little Jews.

But they didn't get a passing Jewish teacher...they got Paul and Paul set down with them and taught them a new faith, new scriptures. One of the women, Lydia, was a merchant from Asia Minor. She was probably a widow of unmarried if she was the merchant. Some of the other women with her were probably slaves or servants from her household. She had her heart opened to Jesus through the preaching of Paul and she and her whole household were baptized into the faith of Christianity.

She was changed by Jesus she became a game changer for him. She had Paul and his companions come to her home and I'm sure more teaching and changing took place in all their lives and Lydia's home became a center of worship and Christian outreach to the region and more lives were changed! I'm looking forward to seeing them in the new heaven and the new earth.

#### **IV – KORBYN'S FUTURE:**

Two Saturday's ago our obviously pregnant granddaughter came downstairs and asked if we had ever seen the movie "Hidden Figures" which we hadn't. So she put it on the TV and we began watching it with her. It's a movie from 2016 about the true lives of three African American women who were intelligent in math and other ways and ended up getting jobs with NASA on the Mercury 7 project which sent the first men into space in our country. One of them figured the actual trajectory of the rockets as they orbited and came back to earth, one ended up programming the first IBM giant computers brought in when no one else could, and one became the first African American women to become a NASA engineer. But it told of their struggles in the 1960's. How they were stopped by Police who couldn't believe they would be working at NASA. How

they had to cross the compound ½ mile just to get to a colored bathroom, how they had to have their own locker room and lunch room. And even a separate coffee pot.

As I watched it I thought how far we had come as a country, but how far we are still behind. We want to think we are color blind, that there is no prejudice against people of color. We want to think we treat women right but we still see they are held back from promotions, they are paid less for doing the same work as men, and they are still sexually abused in the workplace. You know...for a Country whose founding document proclaims that all people are created equal we certainly have a lot to learn. And these are just some of the barriers. And this all carries over to our faith. It has been said that the most segregated hour in America is on Sunday morning! Jesus changed the game, but all the players haven't gotten it yet!

About that time my granddaughter went upstairs to use the bathroom and I heard a loud "grandma" come out of the bathroom where her water had just broke. The next day little "Korwyn" came into the world. I worry that she will still have to face barriers when she grows up. I'm going to make sure though that she knows the Game Changer.

#### **V – REVELATION 22:**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> part of this morning's scripture from Revelation talks about a river of life flowing from the throne of God, and the throne of Jesus. Now you know how he will quench the thirst of those who call on him mentioned in 21:6. But there's something even more amazing I want you to see. If we go all the way back to Genesis 3:22-24 we read this as the story of the broken creation is told:

<sup>22</sup>Then the LORD God said, "Look, the human beings<sup>[a]</sup> have become like us, knowing both good and evil. What if they reach out, take fruit from the tree of life, and eat it? Then they will live forever!"

<sup>23</sup>So the LORD God banished them from the Garden of Eden, and he sent Adam out to cultivate the ground from which he had been made. <sup>24</sup>After sending them out, the LORD God stationed mighty cherubim to the east of the Garden of Eden. And he placed a flaming sword that flashed back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

God took away the tree of life. The tree that allows us to live with him permanently.

That was in the very beginning of this book. But then I get to the very end of it and I see this in verse 2:

<sup>2</sup>... On each side of the river grew a tree of life, ...

What God took away in the beginning he gives back in the end. Salvation is complete for those who believe in the Game Changer. And talk about walking towards the light when your time comes...you'll never be out of the light again. God's light will be with you eternally!

I want to walk in that light and I want all of you too also. So when your time comes...when you're headed for the new heaven and new earth I want you to "walk towards the light" and on the way I want you to grab somebody's hand and drag them there too. I'm taking everyone I can...including Korwyn!

AMEN