The Essentials: Hope

Session 8: Acts 16:16-34 and Revelation 21:1-7

Opening Collect

> *Together:* Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Read: Acts 16:16-34 and Revelation 21:1-7

Opening Thought: What does hope look like? Singing in shackles.

Discussion:

1. Describe the details of Paul's imprisonment in our passage from Acts. Have you ever seen or experienced someone with that kind of hope in a situation of significant duress? Share with your group.
2. Reread vv. 25-31. What is the outward result of Paul's confident hope? How might our own hope drive us to compassion (even for our enemies!)?
3. Our reading from Revelation 21 is *the* vision of ultimate hope for Christians. Describe the details of this vision with your group. Be specific and imagine what is compelling about this vision.
4. The passage specifically details this future as a new city, a kingdom. What about cities or kingdoms do you love? How might those things illuminate the way we think of the future city where God will dwell with his people forever?
5. How might you receive this particular vision from Revelation 21 into your heart in such a way that it would give you hope like Paul's? Journalling? Meditation? Art? Worship? Share as specifically as you can.

Check in and Closing Prayer

Acts 16:16-34

16 One day as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a female slave who had a spirit of divination and
brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. 17 While she followed Paul and us, she would
cry out, "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." 18 She
kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I order you in
the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

19 But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and
dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities. 20 When they had brought them before the
magistrates, they said, "These men, these Jews, are disturbing our city 21 and are advocating customs that are
not lawful for us, being Romans, to adopt or observe." 22 The crowd joined in attacking them, and the
magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. 23 After they had
given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them
securely. 24 Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the
stocks.

25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening
to them. 26 Suddenly there was an earthquake so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken,
and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. 27 When the jailer woke
up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed
that the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted in a loud voice, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all
here." 29 The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he
brought them outside and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They answered, "Believe in the Lord
Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all
who were in his house. 33 At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he
and his entire family were baptized without delay. 34 He brought them up into the house and set food before
them, and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

Revelation 21:1-7

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the
sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared
as a bride adorned for her husband; 3 and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the
dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will
be with them; 4 he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there
be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away."

5 And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these
words are trustworthy and true." 6 And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the
beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without
payment. 7 The one who conquers shall have this heritage, and I will be his God and he shall be my son.