**Acts 16:11-40**

Introduction

I. The analogy of trying to fold a fitted sheet—it’s complicated.

II. We are living in a very complicated world. Christianity is no longer the dominant worldview in our culture, and so Christian assumptions and Christian practices no longer dominate our world.

III. The apostle Paul also lived in a time where Christianity was not the dominant worldview. The way he interacted with the world is a great example for us.

The Passage

I. The conversion of Lydia: God is at work in this world

A. Paul had a strategy (v. 13): There probably weren’t enough Jewish men in the city to constitute a synagogue, so Paul goes to a place of prayer outside the city to a place of prayer and shares the gospel

B. But ultimately it was God who opened Lydia’s heart (v. 14)

C. Likewise we need to have intentionality and strategies in sharing the gospel, but it is God who opens people’s hearts.

II. The exorcism of the slave girl: there is a spiritual battle going on

A. The owners of the slave girl accuse Paul and Silas of being Jews who are causing civil unrest. They were beaten and thrown into prison.

B. Paul and Silas don’t mention their Roman citizenship and are generally passive in the process. It is probably because of their understanding of the nature of the real conflict: a spiritual battle going on in this world. The spiritual issues are what are most important to Paul in that moment.

C. We need to recognize that there is a spiritual battle going on in our lives and the lives of our children, friends, etc. that is so much more significant than the economic and political issues of our time. Our priority should be with these spiritual issues more than political or economic issues.

III. Every situation is an opportunity to do ministry for God’s kingdom

A. Paul and Silas were actually singing praises to God in prison!

B. And even when God opens the jail doors, Paul and Silas don’t leave immediately in order to minister to the jailor. God is clearly working in the jailor’s heart, and Paul shares the message of salvation and teaches him, and the jailor and his family are converted. Then Paul and Silas actually go back to jail!

C. Paul then drops the news that he is a Roman citizen and requests that the magistrates apologize and escort them out. Paul does this because he wants an opportunity to put the new church in good standing in the city.

 D. Paul saw every situation as an opportunity to do God’s ministry work.

E. We so often get caught up in the everyday opportunities of life that we miss the opportunities God has for us to do ministry work.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What most struck you from Sunday’s message?

2. Consider the first two points made regarding Paul’s experience in Philippi: 1) that God is the one who opens people’s hearts and 2) that there is a spiritual battle taking place that is deeper than the circumstantial battles. How should those realities affect the way we live our lives each day?

3. The apostle Paul clearly saw the circumstances of his life as opportunities to share the gospel and demonstrate kingdom values to those around him. What opportunities has God put in your life lately? Are there specific opportunities that are being presented in this season of your life?

4. Is there anyone specific that God is putting on your heart to love and/or share your faith with at this time? What would be a good next step for you (praying for them, sharing a meal, having a conversation, etc.)?