

## EASTER: REJOICING IN RESURRECTION HOPE

**Seventh Sunday of Easter**

**May 16, 2010**

**Acts 16:16-34**

**Psalm 97**

**Revelation 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20-21**

**John 17:20-26**

### **Shaken to the Foundations**

Sometimes when we think we know a story, we can be oblivious to the power concentrated below the surface. The stories themselves might even glance over things which can shake our foundations.

Like the story of Paul and Silas, familiar in song and evangelical preaching. It is known so clearly and truly as a sign of divine action, bringing God's people out of captivity. We recognize this story, having heard it with the Hebrew slaves in Egypt, the return from exile, and Jesus' resurrection from the dead. We long for this story, in the hope that we too may be delivered from persecution, trial, and captivity. In the middle of the night, when Paul and Silas were praying and singing praises to God, "a strong earthquake shook the jail to its foundations. The doors opened, and the chains fell from all the prisoners" (Acts 16:26, *CEV*). Hallelujah!

But after China, Chile, Haiti, just this year ... can we read past the destructive power of an earthquake? A quake strong enough to shake the foundations of the jail is strong enough to flatten many other buildings. The text doesn't tell us, so God only knows what is going on outside.

Inside the jail, it seems that Paul's and Silas' faith is unshakable. But the jailer may be a more compelling character for us. The earth quakes, and so does he.

Earthquakes literally shake foundations. The earth is the one thing we normally know as certain, solid. It holds the weight of our bodies, our belongings, our buildings. And in an instant, what we have always relied on is shaken.

We know for sure that the jailer was distressed. He certainly feared the consequences of these prisoners escaping. But we should not discount the traumatic nature of the solid earth shaking and the solid symbol of human rule – the stones walls of the prison – being broken open.

Disciples of Jesus knew this story, too. They had seen the solid rule of Rome and the Temple system crack open. Even the solid stone tomb of death could not hold against the name of Jesus.

Maybe in this light the prisoners' faith makes more sense. They can proclaim "Have faith in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved!" (Acts 16:31, *CEV*) because their own world had been shaken,

and they have known the Lord's steadying hand, a love that was stronger than persecution and death. They knew God as the one foundation that cannot be shaken.

In the face of calamity, a confident and sure voice can speak deliverance. The jailer hears. The man who had been afraid that his prisoners would escape now leads them out of jail himself. After washing their wounds, he let Jesus wash his, in baptism. And his household, which may have been shaken, is now set on a new foundation, seen in the hospitality he extends to those he had imprisoned.

Prayer, praise, and faith in Jesus still shakes the foundations of all that is false, sick, and built on sin. And it will continue to do so until all the captives are released.

This week's Reflection was prepared by Paul Bellan-Boyer, who works with religious congregations in the NJ Regional Coalition in community organizing for economic justice. To learn more about Paul Bellan-Boyer's work, visit his blog at [citycalledheaven.blogspot.com](http://citycalledheaven.blogspot.com)

+ + +

**This week we remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: Congo (Democratic Republic)** – With thanks to God for his guidance, the completion of the Kiluba Bible translation, and for their new board; and with prayers for ongoing translation work, Faith Comes by Hearing, literacy, HIV and AIDS work, visually impaired ministries, lasting peace in the eastern portion of the nation, and God's blessing on collaboration with other Christian organizations and grant-making Bible societies; **Congo (Brazzaville)** – With thanks to God for Bible Sundays which are boosting distribution and fundraising, and for political stability allowing for open warehouses in Nkayi and Dolisie; and with prayers for the ability to reach into other parts of the country, translation projects, literacy and HIV/AIDS work; **Central African Republic** - With thanks to God for the launch of the NT and Psalms in modern Sango, for successful literacy work among women, improving relations with churches; and with prayers for printing and launching of the Bible in modern Sango, other ongoing projects, and general development of the Bible Society.

**Activity Corner:** "Life-giving Water" Poster

Supplies needed: Bible; writing paper; pens or pencils; poster board; marker; magazines; glue or paste; scissors; pitcher of water; glasses/cups.

Across the top of the poster board write the words, LIFE-GIVING WATER. Invite members of your household to look through magazines for pictures of water. Cut out the pictures and mount them on the poster board. Then invite everyone to list all the uses of water. Discuss the ways in which water is essential to sustain life.

Read together Psalm 23.1-3; Psalm 42.1-2; Isaiah 55.1-5; John 4.7-15; Revelation 22.1-2, 17.

Talk about how water is used in each of these passages. Discuss what it means to receive God's "life-giving water." Invite everyone to write a prayer, thanking God for the gift of water and for offering everyone "life-giving water." Conclude by drinking a cool glass of water and singing "Shall we gather at the river" or "I've got peace like a river," or another of your favorite hymns.