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Acts 16:9-15  
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### Who is Coming for Dinner?

Good morning church, we do not know much about Lydia, only that she sold purple cloth and invited Paul into her home, making her the head of the household. So I let my imagination run wild to imagine who Lydia was and how Paul's message throughout his letters would have appealed to her specifically. So today's sermon will be a monologue from Lydia's point of view.

Please pray with me. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be pleasing to you, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

Have you ever met someone who came into your life and changed it forever?

I am a God worshipping Greek. I left behind the religion of my ancestors, instead, worship an all-mighty God far away in Judea. The Jewish people would call me a God-fearer because I was not born into God's people. I am not an inheritor of the promise and right now I feel like someone on the outside looking in.

I was honoring the Sabbath in our own way. We were a small gathering, Mostly my co-workers and friends who met outside the city. We had some great plans. We were going to build a synagogue by the river just as soon as we had ten men to make our group "important enough" to be a real synagogue.

But I don't have time for that waiting business. Leave waiting to the philosophers and politicians, I'm a businesswoman of action. And my actions bear fruits because I sell only the finest clothes to the richest clients. My workers gather seaside snails and boil them in huge vats to make purple dye. And it takes thousands of shells to make a single stripe on a Roman toga. It is a lot of human sweat for such a little thing, but my father handed down the family business to me and I am proud of my work.

So I work hard and worship harder. I don't care if it's just me and my younger sisters out here praying. I'm going to read the scriptures for the people, sometimes I even have some idea of what it means to love my neighbor and the stranger. These scriptures have made me into a bit of a hostess, inviting traveling Rabbis into my home so they can share their wisdom from across the empire.

So when this Paul guy and his friends show up, I sure am excited to hear his wisdom. But then he brings us a message both new and old. One that comes from the depths of Isaiah, that foreigners

have a place in God's people, but also new words. He told a tale about a man named Jesus who loved everyone he met, from the slaves to the wealthy. And Paul said, Jesus, had this mission to bring all the peoples of the earth together as one people. Paul told me it did not matter that I was Greek. I had equal ownership of God's promise to be faithful. And Paul told me I did not have to wait for ten men. He was going to establish a church of women right here and now because God doesn't belong to the gatekeepers

For my whole faith journey, I felt like a second-class God worshiper, I'm a woman and a Greek. And while I am respected in my community, the visiting Rabbis would tell me to sit behind the men and Jews. It did not matter how long I kept this little group going, I never saw myself as a leader. But Paul changed all that. He spoke to me like I was an equal, a faithful woman of God. In the way of Jesus, we were all brothers and sisters.

There is no longer Jew or Greek, Male or Female, Slave or Free. Amen.