

Discipleship Moment

Text: Acts 16:25-34

I love motorcycles. I really, really love motorcycles. I grew up always wanting to ride and then my desire went dormant through college. But something happened in 2014. Indian Motorcycle, an old American motorcycle company that had been closed until about 2011, rolled out their new, innovative machines. They introduced the Thunder Stroke 111 cubic inch V-Twin engine. This monster of an engine was an incredible innovation in motorcycle motors. They have two valves per cylinder powered by three camshafts. That may not mean anything to you, but that means that these motors will produce more reliability, predictability, and longevity. These engines produce about 118 lb-ft of torque, which is the twisting strength of motor when you use the throttle to turn the wheels. Making these motorcycles perfect for cruising around town and on blacktop country roads. They have a punchy "put-put, put-put" when they are idling and a deep, smooth thunder when revved. Putting these engines onto the classic Indian style models, its truly a thing of beauty. The last five years of my life have been anxiously waiting and desiring to get my hands on one of these machines. Don't get me wrong, I like Harleys, and the Milwaukee 107 engine is great, but Indian has done something truly special with the Thunder Stroke 111.

Oh, and these engines are loud. They don't have the iconic "plop-plop, plop-plop" of a Harley, but the low end truly sounds like thunder. I would also slap aftermarket exhausts on my motorcycle to make the machine even louder. Maybe you don't like loud motorcycles. Maybe you've been passed by a motorcycle or heard one cruise down your street and you give the rider a side-eye scowl because of how loud their motorcycle is. But think about this: when you are on a motorcycle, you have nothing to protect you. You are not in an enclosed metal or carbon fiber box like a car. It is just you, and, if you crash, the road. Add to that the fact that people are so distracted when they drive: changing the radio, reading a text, looking at the GPS navigation, I mean, our cars come with infotainment systems that look more like television screens than GPS's, for goodness sake. But, if a motorcycle is loud there is no question that they are there. If their bike makes enough noise, it is going to cause a driver to look for that bike. Where the car driver may be looking at their GPS and change lanes without looking carefully, a loud motorcycle will state the riders' presence before you can ever see them. Loud motorcycles save lives.

We heard on Sunday from Pastor Ben that one of the reasons that Paul and Silas were so effective in their ministry was that they were so bold and unapologetic about their faith. While in prison they sang songs and prayed. They didn't necessarily start their time in prison by evangelizing, they started by simply doing what they would have done if they weren't in prison: pray and praise. And I think some of the wisdom we see in this passage is in this fact: Paul and Silas were not necessarily evangelizing at first. They simply let the way they lived their lives and the way they responded to adversity speak for themselves. They were like loud motorcycles. You knew they were Christians because of how they lived, then they let their lived witness become a vocal witness to Jesus and his work for us.

I often wonder something like this: if I wasn't a pastor, would people know I was a Jesus-person? Maybe you could ask it this way: if I didn't talk about Jesus, would people know I am a Christian?

When we hear "wear your faith on your sleeve" as Pastor Ben said on Sunday, we may think of a couple of things. The first is those horrible groups of people who claim Jesus but write horrible things on picket signs and protest anything they don't like. Or we think of those businesses (businesses I really don't like) that produce poor quality services or goods, but they play Christian music, so they are "being a witness" to Jesus.

Paul and Silas didn't fall into either of these categories. They were bold in their faith, and they experienced power when God sent an earthquake and released the prisoner's chains. Paul and Silas weren't trying to convert with platitudes, they were boldly living their faith, and when God did mighty things for their benefit, they used it as an opportunity to share the faith. The mighty works are what made the Guard ask Paul and Silas about Jesus.

So, our bold faith serves as a pointer. When God does mighty works through us, like producing an excellent product or service in our business, or you are there to offer comfort to a hurting person, or some other good work, then they will know exactly why you're doing that thing. We can't fool ourselves into believing that wearing our faith on our sleeves just means we have verses on our walls and play Christian music while doing a bad job or being a rude person. We have to live our faith—do excellent work—that is wearing our faith on our sleeve.

Living out our faith doesn't mean that are actively trying to get everyone around us to act and believe like us, either. We are not trying to coerce those around us to be like us. We have been given a great gift. We have been given a great love. God has been patient and merciful to us again and again. If we don't treat others with the same patience and grace then we are like the wicked, ungrateful servant Jesus told the parable about. And it didn't turn out well for that servant.

We have been given a great gift. We are brought into close relationship with God through Jesus Christ. We are given eternal life that starts now as life abundant. And we can show and tell others about this eternal life abundant. We can be like aftermarket exhausts on a rad Indian Chieftain with a Thunder Stroke 111. We rumble past people and they give us the side-eye and a scowl. But they know we're there.

Live your Christian life unapologetically. Just do your life well. Love God, love others. Do your work with excellence. And tell others why you are the way you are.

Going Deeper

Use this resource to start conversations about this week's sermon for your personal devotions, with your family, or with your Life Group. You can use one question per day or all at once.

1. What do you think it means to "live with your faith on your sleeve"?
2. Do you think you live with your faith on your sleeve? Why or why not?
3. How did Paul and Silas handle the adversity they faced in this passage? What does this tell us about how we can handle hard times?
4. Are there times in your life where you trusted God through adversity and others noticed? Are there times where you didn't trust God and others noticed? How can trusting God through hard times be a witness to others about Jesus?
5. Pray and think about 5 things you can do to wear your faith on your sleeve this week. Do them. And be prepared with the definition of Gospel you wrote last week, in case anyone asks you why you believe the way you do.