

15 Acts 16:1-15 European Christian mission

Someone has said, “We do not see things as they are. We see things as we are.” The way we see the world will affect the way we tell, or receive the good news of Christ.

Paul and his team planned to visit a number of places on their journey, which would take them north through Asia Minor (v. 6-10). They continue to preach, firstly to Jews but also to Gentiles. However, the Holy Spirit blocked each direction they took because God wanted them to cross ethnic and geographical boundaries they had not previously imagined. They received unexpected (but unmistakable) guidance to take the good news over to Macedonia.

The journey continued (v. 11–15), leading them to Philippi, a Roman colony, which effectively was a piece of Rome transplanted abroad. Those living there would have considered themselves to be Roman, rather than Philippians or Macedonians. Here Paul moves outside the city limits to speak with those who were restricted and possibly marginalised within the colony: a group of women meeting near a river. God used Paul, who moved beyond his normal culture of the synagogue or town centre, to reach Lydia, an immigrant to the region, and establish the beginning of a distinctly Christian fellowship in Europe. If we are European, this is part of our story.

Reflect for a moment.

Have we allowed our background to interrupt the passing on of God’s good news?

Do we allow someone else’s background or culture to interfere with what God is saying through them to us?

Do we believe that the world and those in it are really as we see them or are we open to seeing as God sees?

Pray: Thank you Lord that you see things as they are. Help us to see things as You do.