

"Purple: Royalty, Honor and Dignity"

Acts 16

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Exodus 25:1,2,8; 26:1; 27:16; 28:2,6; 2 Corinthians 2:1,7; Daniel 5:29; Luke 16:19; Mark 15:17-20;
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Hayward United Methodist Church

Call to Worship

There is not one of us that have gotten it all right, all have fallen short of the glory of God.

Yet we have one who stand in the gap for us, Christ Jesus.

It is through him that we enter the most holy place and find refuge in God.

Through him we may know ourselves accepted: not judged but loved, not condemned but forgiven.

Let us worship God, our joy and our salvation.

Prayer of Invocation

All-seeing, All-knowing God, there is nowhere in heaven or on earth where we can hide from you; our inmost being is laid bare before you. And yet we are unafraid because we trust your word, the word of unconditional love spoken in Jesus the Christ. We have come to worship you. Amen.

The Scavenger Hunt "Where in your world have you seen God in the color purple this week?"

A Rainbow Color; Bruises from Blood Tests; Purple heart medal; Purple Ribbons. Irises -2; Thistles -2; Lilacs-2; African Violets -2; Pansy; Purple Mountains Majesty. Grapes – 3; Eggplant; plums; 43 men dressed in purple (MN Vikings). Large Amethyst rock found on a vacation around Lake Superior. Liturgical Christian Calendar; Majesty

The Word – A Litany of 'Purple' Scripture

The LORD said to Moses: Tell the Israelites to collect gift offerings for me. Receive my gift offerings from everyone who freely wants to give. They should make me a sanctuary so I can be present among them. Make the dwelling with ten curtains of fine twisted linen and blue, purple, and deep red yarns. Work figures of winged heavenly creatures into their design. For the gate into the courtyard there will be a screen thirty feet long, made of blue, purple, and deep red yarns and of fine twisted linen, decorated with needlework. Exodus 25:1,2,8;26:1; 27:16

Make holy clothing that will give honor and dignity to your brother Aaron. They should make the priest's ornamental vest of gold, of blue, purple, and deep red yarns and of fine twisted linen with embroidered designs. Exodus 28:2,6

Solomon gave orders to build a temple for the LORD's name and to build a royal palace for himself. So now send me a craftsman skilled in gold, silver, bronze, and iron, as well as in purple, crimson, and violet yarn—someone also experienced as an engraver. He will work with my craftsmen in Judah and Jerusalem who were provided by my father David. 2 Chronicles 2:1,7

Then Belshazzar commanded that Daniel be dressed in a purple robe, have a gold chain around his neck, and be officially appointed as third in command in the kingdom. Daniel 5:29

Jesus said, "There was a certain rich man who clothed himself in purple and fine linen, and who feasted luxuriously every day." Luke 16:19

They dressed him up in a purple robe and twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on him. They saluted him, "Hey! King of the Jews!" Again and again, they struck his head with a stick. They spit on him and knelt before him to honor him. When they finished mocking him, they stripped him of the purple robe and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. Mark 15:17-20

Living the Word

Just like the word 'Amen' - Purple was known from Ancient times forward.

The purple color was produced from an extremely expensive dye called Tyrian purple which originated in Tyre in Lebanon. The Phoenicians owned the monopoly on this purple dye which was made by crushing thousands of sea shells - Mediterranean Murex, purple and deep red.

The reason it was so costly is because of its enduring quality, one that improved, rather than faded, with age. And also it was wildly expensive because of the process used to make it.

The source of the dye was the *murex brandaris*, which is a name for a spiny sea snail. While it's possible to capture one of these little gastropods and poke it until it excretes a defensive mucus containing at least one of the ingredients required to make the precious purple, milking the murex snails was entirely too labor intensive.

The exact process by which the dye was made has not been perfectly reproduced to date, but it involved vats of rotting shellfish. The smell was so terrible that dye factories had to be built far away from population centers. Mountains of shells attest to their presence.

To meet demand, millions of murex were harvested. More than a thousand shells were needed to make even one gram of dye. It took ten thousand Murex mollusks to make dye for just one robe! This purple dye was worth more than its weight in gold and therefore came to symbolize both wealth and power.

- Stories behind the scriptures we read earlier:

From Exodus the story of the tabernacle of God defined by God in detail to Moses, including many fabrics of blue, purple and deep red. These fabrics, also worn by the priests to give them honor and dignity. God knew that the people would see the importance of the tabernacle if they had to sacrifice their best possessions for the building of it.

Later when the Hebrew people had settled, Solomon was given the task by God to make the tabernacle a permanent temple, with all of the same fine fabrics.

Many years later when Daniel was able to interpret dreams for the King who held him captive, he was respected, honored and rewarded with a purple robe as well as third in command in that kingdom.

Jesus used purple and fine linen to define a rich man to the people before them, many of whom would not have been able to have anything purple, but recognized the importance of it.

And then when Pilate's soldiers wanted to mock Jesus, they dressed him in a purple robe and a crown of thorns to humiliate him. Little did they know, he was due the robe and a crown, but not the mocking.

- Lydia Acts 16

A vision of a man from Macedonia came to Paul during the night. He stood urging Paul, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" Immediately after he saw the vision, we prepared to leave for the province of Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the riverbank, where we thought there might be a place for prayer. We sat down and began to talk with the women who had gathered. One of those women was Lydia, a Gentile God-worshipper from the city of Thyatira, a dealer in purple cloth. As she listened, the Lord enabled her to embrace Paul's message. Once she and her household were baptized, she urged, "Now that you have decided that I am a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house." And she persuaded us.

We know almost nothing about Lydia, but what we know fascinates us.

She is portrayed as a pious woman, a worshipper of God, who was first to respond to Paul's offer of the gospel when he entered Macedonia. She was from Thyatira and made garments of purple dye, an occupation that suggests she clothed the wealthy and was well off herself as a business woman in a prominently man's business world. She was an example of hospitality, since she housed Paul after she was baptized by him. She hosted him later in his mission as well.

That day, possibly as she may have on other occasions, she went down to the riverside at Philippi, to pray with a group of women. There was no synagogue in that community, so the riverside was a gathering place for people seeking communal prayer together.

Paul was seeking God seekers. Lydia found Christ, who was looking for her through the work of Paul. Paul did his part, Lydia did hers, but it is God who guides all things and works in and through all things, not just for good but for what we would otherwise see as impossible.

Lydia's household was the first in Europe known to have been converted and baptized. Before Paul left Philippi, he returned to Lydia with encouragement for the newly formed Christian community, then they left on their way to Thessalonica. It was to this little Christian community at Philippi, that Paul later wrote a letter full of happiness, gratitude, affection and reassurance: the letter we have titled in our Bibles as the book of Philippians.

- Purple for us

There are a number of ways that purple still hold high esteem for us today. Ask any 4-H member who has received a purple ribbon at the fair...Usually it is the top ribbon given and is reserved for only one in each category of judging.

The purple heart medal is one of honor and courage, given only to those who have been wounded or killed in action, for their country.

In the Seasons of the Liturgical Church year, the color purple is represented as Advent a time of preparation for royalty... "Christ WILL come again..." We are made royal not by status that we obtain, but through Christ we are royal.

And Lent a time of preparation as in repentance before Easter...

40 days to work at getting 'right' with God before the 2nd coming or 'resurrection'. We need to be aware of our short comings, and strive for better ways in our lives,. Even so we are made right with God through our relationship with Jesus.

How many of you have a royal purple robe of honor? I invite you to sit and imagine it as I read you a devotion from my daily reading in the book "Jesus is Calling"

Imagine Jesus saying to you: Wear my robe of righteousness with ease. I custom made it for you, to cover you from head to toe. The price I paid for this covering was astronomical – My own blood. You could never purchase such a royal garment, no matter how hard you worked. Sometime you forget that my righteousness is a gift., and you feel ill at ease in your regal robe. I weep when I see you squirming under the velvety fabric, as if it were made with scratchy sackcloth.

I want you to trust me enough to realize your privileged position in my kingdom. Relax in the luxuriant fold of your magnificent robe. Keep your eyes on me, as you practice walking in this garment of salvation. When your behavior is unfitting for one in my kingdom, do not try to throw off your royal robe. Instead throw off the unrighteous behavior. Then you will be able to feel at ease in this glorious garment, enjoying the gift I fashioned for you before the foundation of the world.

