

# “I Am Content”

Acts 16:9-15

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

As the world prepares for this summer's Olympics in Brazil, you may have heard that Brazil's economy is not doing so well, as natural resources and oil are the primary movers of their economy. In 2010, Eike Batista from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil cracked the Top 10 wealthiest people in the world. He was #8 on Forbes 400 list. At the time, he was 53 years old and had assets in excess of \$27 billion. He had made his fortune in the oil and mining industry. His level of wealth increased by more than \$19 billion in that year alone (2010). But he was not content. His stated vow was that he would not be satisfied, he would not be content until he was #1 on the list of the richest men in the world.

I had mentioned this in a sermon back in 2010. What a wasted opportunity. What a wasted life. His family life was a mess. He was not interested in charitable work. His only interest was in being number one on the list. He has no idea of what true wealth really is. As Solomon says, “He is chasing after the wind.” He will never be content. That is what I said in a sermon six years ago. Had he gotten to #1, if his outlook on life

did not change, my guess is that he still would not be content because he would be obsessed with staying #1.

Let me give you a little update on Eike and his quest to be the richest man in the world. In 2012, he had moved up the list to #7 and his net worth peaked in excess of \$32 billion. In 2013, his company filed for bankruptcy and he was no longer a billionaire. In 2014, Eike Batista's personal wealth was negative \$1.2 billion. He is now a negative billionaire.

Lydia is a seller of purple – a very expensive and sought after commodity in the days of the apostles. The people of Thyatira were famed for their skill in the manufacture of purple dye – extracted from the juice of the madder root. This technique was still in use until the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century when chemical dyes were invented.

Lydia was wealthy. She wasn't #7 or #8 on the list of wealthiest persons in the Roman world, but she wasn't doing bad. There is archaeological evidence – certain inscriptions which have been found in Philippi – suggesting there was a guild of merchants of purple. Lydia was a member of that guild. Under Roman law, women had the right to undertake legal transactions if they had never been a slave and were the mother of three or more children. If the woman had been a slave (and had been redeemed out of slavery) she could conduct business if she was the mother of four or more children. (We aren't the first society to have strange commerce rules.)

Lydia is such a great role model, but not because she is this strong, independent woman doing man's work in a man's world. Her value as a role model is seen in how she is led to the apostle Paul.

Lydia was a Gentile from Thyatira, a town northeast of Ephesus. Most likely, she learned of and became faithful to the Living God, the God of the Hebrews, while in Thyatira. There was a Jewish presence and Jewish synagogues in that region. She came to faith, and when she went off to Philippi to conduct her business, even though there was no active synagogue in that town, she gathered with other faithful and did not let the day of the Lord go unnoticed.

As some of our young members will be finishing various levels of schooling, no longer living at home, and possibly departing Quincy in the months ahead, there is always the temptation to let the Lord's day go unnoticed. We can always find other activities – especially when the Sun is shining and our friends who are not among the faithful invite us to come and join them.

When we get separated from God's family, it is amazing how easy it becomes to stay away and how quickly we allow ourselves to become spiritually alone.

Lydia moved away from home and there was no church, there was no synagogue for her to attend. In order to have a functioning synagogue, there has to be 10 Jewish men present. Philippi is a Roman colony. All that Lydia and the others who were faithful to the Living God had was a place of prayer outside the city. But she didn't make that an excuse to not worship.

Paul finds her and the other faithful of Philippi, and the Lord opens her heart to hear the Gospel – the good news of salvation, the forgiveness of sins. Paul preaches Christ crucified as he always did – the empty tomb,

the promise of eternal life. This is the message that the people of God have always longed to here. This is the message that God's servants have been sent to proclaim.

Lydia receives this good news and is baptized – she and her household as well. Her children are with her at that place of prayer. I told you she is a good role model. She has her children with her. She doesn't leave them home with the servants, and when it says her household was baptized as well, it can be implied that this included her servants also.

Her focus is on being “faithful to the Lord” and seeing to it that not only she, but “her household as well” was baptized and counted among the faithful. She says, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay.”

For all of her success in the business world, for all of her wealth, Lydia's sole concern is that her and her household are faithful to the Lord and judged to be faithful to the Lord. Gathering for worship, bringing her children to be baptized, hearing and believing the Word of God brought Lydia a level of wealth greater than all the wealth of all the sellers of purple. The wealth she had was wealth that Eike Batista has never known – even when he was in the top ten. Few words express praise to God like the words we just sang, “I am content! At length I shall be free, Awakened from the dead . . . The chains that hold my body, sever; Then shall my soul rejoice forever. I am content! I am content!” Amen.

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!