

Sixth Tuesday of Easter ~ 5/15

"When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'"

(Acts 16:27-28)

Being a prison guard in the time of Paul and Silas could be hazardous to one's health. To lose prisoners might mean that you faced torture or and at the very least you might end up taking the place of those who escaped. When he found the cell door unlocked this guard decided to kill himself rather than face the consequences. In his estimation nothing could have been worse than to lose his prisoners.

At the moment when he is ready to plunge the sword into his own heart Paul called out to him. Imagine the shock for this man when he recognized the voice. Surely he was having a hallucination. If the prison door was open then the prisoners must have taken advantage of the situation and run off. Because he could not believe his ears he immediately has light brought into the cell to verify what he had heard. On a night when nothing seems to be as it should be, he saw with his own eyes that his prisoners have not escaped. He had been saved because these men did not flee.

Up until this point we can almost understand the actions and the responses of the guard, but things then really become strange. This guard, who just moments ago, wanted to take his own life because he had lost his prisoners, now opened the cell, let Paul and Silas out and asked them what he must do to be saved. He was willing to risk the possibility of torture and imprisonment on earth so that he might be saved in God's kingdom.

In the darkest moments of our lives, when we feel like we are on the edge of a great abyss, we must listen carefully for the voice that will offer to save us. It will first be heard in the darkness, and if we believe the ears of our soul then eventually light will be shed and we will come to understand. And once we understand we move to a higher plane of living and things that were frightening before have little effect on us now. Conversion is about moving from darkness into light and seeing with brave new eyes the world around us.

Questions for Reflection

- 1. Have I ever had a crisis in my life bring me to a higher plain of living?*
- 2. What fears have I let go of as I have come to know Jesus more deeply?*

Prayer: Jesus, there is a terrified prison guard inside of me at times. Help me to hear your call in those dark moments of life so that I might discover a higher plain of living.