

Title: SERVING IN SMALL/BIG WAYS, ACTS 21:7 – 9
(Chatham, NJ; 04/08/18, AM) [Pc – Order of Importance]

Theme: The church in ancient Caesarea functioned because people like Philip served in small but big ways to witness to the Gospel.

Purpose: To demonstrate how the church in Caesarea, though unsung in the New Testament, nevertheless performed great things on behalf of the Kingdom of God.

Introduction:

1. Paul stays with Philip on his way to Jerusalem, Acts 21:7-9.
2. They are in the city of Caesarea, a town rich in the history of the Kingdom.
3. I offer them as a model and sister church for Chatham.

Flashback to Philip and Cornelius

- A. Philip's Exploits, Acts 8: imagine you are a young Christian witnessing Paul entering Philip's house and you learn about Philip's early work
 1. A pillar of the early church: good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, 6:3-7
 2. Chosen by his peers to distribute food
 3. Scattered to the Samaritans, 8:4-8; through him the Gospel first came to them
 4. Sent to meet an Ethiopian eunuch, 8:26-27
 5. Eventually settled in Caesarea, 8:40
 6. By Acts 21 his ministry has taken on a whole new aspect of service
- B. You learn about the watershed event in Caesarea: the Gospel for the world, Acts 10
 1. Cornelius: devout, God-fearing, giver of alms, and man of prayer, 1-2
 2. Still needed the Gospel: Peter sent to him: he receives the Spirit and is baptized
 3. Convergence of Philip's arrival?
 4. Might Philip have had a maturing influence on this new convert?
 5. Kingdom things are happening in Caesarea!
 6. Acts focuses on Antioch: many Gentiles, origin of Paul's missionary journeys
 7. Yet Caesarea is not eclipsed

Serving in Caesarea, Acts 21

- A. Paul stays with Philip on his way to Jerusalem, 7-9 (you, young Christian, are still observing)
 1. He has been here since converting the Eunuch; his travelling days ended
 2. Apparently he fell in love, married, and has raised four daughters
 3. You see him still toiling for the Kingdom, for the sake of his family, for the good of the church in Caesarea
 4. He and his family are practicing hospitality: Paul stayed with him for "many days," 10
 5. When everyone tried to persuade Paul not to go to Jerusalem, Philip must have been in the group
 6. In spite of this, the church in Caesarea was better because of at least one man's family
- B. More than Philip, 16
 1. Others served as well: they accompanied Paul on the next leg of his journey (maybe you were one who went with them)
 2. Perhaps a larger group afforded protection, perhaps just companionship, perhaps you just want to be around Paul
 3. Not a single one of you gets the benefit of being named
 4. But that isn't what service is about, is it?
 5. Serving God and others reflects a humble spirit, serving without recognition
 6. The key: the church in Caesarea had committed disciples

Small/Big Scale Opportunities, Acts 23

- A. Boots on the ground
 - 1. Have you ever heard of Hockeyville? (a program sponsored by Kraft Foods along with the NHL and the NHLPA)
 - 2. Have you ever heard of the Brandon Ice Cats, the Clinton Comets, or the Shreveport Mudbugs? What? No?
 - 3. All are teams that play in places nominated for Hockeyville funds to improve their hockey arenas
 - 4. The NHL recognizes that hockey and the love for the game begin in small, local, not-so-famous places
 - 5. As hockey needs numerous places like them, so the church needs places like Caesarea . . . and Chatham

- B. A lot more took place in Caesarea
 - 1. We learn about Felix, Festus, and Paul's witness to Agrippa
 - 2. We also know that Paul was left in prison for two years

- C. Service without recognition
 - 1. How did the church respond when Paul came back as a prisoner?
 - 2. How did they follow up with those who heard Paul's testimony in front of Agrippa's court?
 - 3. How did they carry on after Paul left?
 - 4. The Kingdom of God today needs Hockeyvilles and Caesareas.
 - 5. Places who serve at the grassroots level in their communities in whatever capacity God has called them to serve.

Conclusions:

- 1. There are a lot of unwritten parts to this story.
- 2. There are still some unwritten parts to Chatham's story.
- 3. Is each of you willing to help write a new chapter in Chatham's history?
- 4. Will you be one of the unnamed servants in a church like Caesarea?
- 5. Will you look to Caesarea to be your model of quiet but committed and persistent service?
- 6. You don't have to be a famous hero who performs monumental achievements—like playing in the NHL; you just have to be faithful.
- 7. Commit yourself to play a vital role in this congregation. The Kingdom of God needs places like Caesarea and Chatham.
- 8. Your small, persistent service plays a big role in advancing the Kingdom of God.