In the story of the slave girl in Philippi we see someone who is being exploited by a consortium of owners. This is a young person in jeopardy, the kind of person ignored, and we fail to see in our midst. There are things in our midst we cannot allow ourselves to fail to see, refugees, undocumented people, fellow students who may be victims of physical, verbal, or cyber abuse.

The thing that intrigues me most about the story is that unlike with Lydia and the jailer, two different people who become believers thanks to Paul's efforts in Philippi, it's not clear if the slave girl, who becomes economically useless to her masters once she is healed of her affliction, becomes part of the community of believers. Paul, like many adults, is just annoyed because she impinges on his world. To some extent she is invisible, much as slavery is invisible in our own country, yet it is there, in the garment industry, in manufacturing, in agriculture, and in the sex trade. How specific the speaker wishes to be is up to them and others.

It takes courage to see that there is a problem. It takes courage to acknowledge there is a problem. It takes courage and strength to act on that problem. Many problems are beyond any one of us to solve, but looking, seeing, and acting we may at least report or intervene in other ways -- but acting courageously in some fashion is necessary.

Can young people change things? Consider the story of Julia Gilbert, whose story is told in the book “The Love Feast.” As a young teen she challenged her congregation to change the way they celebrated the Love Feast so it would be more in accordance with the Bible. Later, she dedicated decades to changing the way women were marginalized in the Love Feast.