

48—Acts 19.21-41—The Way disturbs the World

- I. Introduction
 - a. If you are still pondering on the questions from last week:
 - i. Would you live your life differently if the resurrection of Christ were not true?
 - ii. Does your life look any different because the resurrection of Christ is true?
 - b. In our text this morning you will get to see a few people living their lives differently because of the resurrection of Christ as well as many people who live their lives merely for the present because they do not believe the resurrection is true.
 - c. You may struggle to believe the resurrection is true and if so, can you tell me why Jesus' disciples lived like this if Jesus is still in the tomb? It begs the question—if so, many people believe the resurrection is true, why then do their lives look no different than the world?
 - d. An additional question that comes from this text: does your following of Jesus and his way disturb anyone in your world? Could it be said of you that you are a danger to the false gods of this world?
- II. Main Point
 - a. The world is disturbed by the Kingdom of the risen Lord Jesus
- III. Outline
 - a. The Kingdom of God Advances through planning, sending, and going
 - b. The Expansion of God's Kingdom disturbs the world
 - c. The world's unlawful response
 - d. Response: Who's really the danger in Ephesus?
- IV. Exposition
 - a. As we enter this new scene in Acts 19, Luke reminds us of the advances in the Kingdom that have been happening as he points us back to the previous events in Ephesus. But the job is not done. Though much has been accomplished, there's more to do as the Kingdom advances through planning, sending, and going.
 - i. Verse 21—(Acts 19:21) Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go
 1. The risen Lord Jesus keeps sending his messengers. Even when this seems to be a normal outcome:
 - a. (Acts 19:10)¹⁰ This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.
 - i. All of Asia! Man, haven't you done enough, Paul?
 - b. And we can't bypass what happened in vv. 19 and 20. (Acts 19:19-20)¹⁹ And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. ²⁰ So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.
 - c. Surely, with the Risen Lord Jesus ruling and reigning from heaven that, no evil will befall them. We will see the opposition in a moment.
 - ii. Well, despite the successes, Paul is resolved in the Spirit to continue the work.
 1. He plans to pass through Macedonia and Achaia again on his way back to Jerusalem, there in v. 21.
 - a. As is Paul's pattern, he plans to circle back to strengthen the disciples before heading to Jerusalem and then to Rome and beyond. There is also a collection being made for the saints to be picked up and delivered to the church in Jerusalem.

- i. The plans concerning this statement, “After I have been there, I must also see Rome” are probably recorded in Romans 15 which is such and encouraging end to that letter.
 - ii. Here’s what he says there: (Rom. 15:20-21) ²⁰ and thus I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, lest I build on someone else’s foundation, ²¹ but as it is written, “Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.”
 - iii. What an amazing ambition to have. It seems clear that Paul lives his life as though he really believes that Christ has been raised and he himself will be raised to eternal life to be with Christ forever.
- 2. Paul plans and he also sends.
 - a. To continue the mission is to prepare more people to do the work of the ministry. Paul must prepare to pass the baton to the next generation. Paul has trained Timothy and Paul sends them out.
 - i. We’ve seen this already, but Timothy has accompanied Paul for the express purpose of continuing the mission of God to make disciples of all nations.
 - ii. Here in v. 22, we see that someone new has joined the mission whose name is Erastus.
 - iii. This must be a priority in the life of the church.
- iii. One last thing before we look at the disturbance. Let’s reorient ourselves around our common purpose and mission. What is the mission of the church? What are we trying to accomplish?
 - 1. Our grand purpose as a church is to glorify God. That the big umbrella truth under which everything else hangs.
 - a. The mission of the church is the great commission. “We believe the church is sent into the world to witness to Jesus by proclaiming the gospel and making disciples of all nations.”
 - b. As we consider the following verses, I think you will see there is no attempt to tear down the temple of Artemis.
 - c. There’s no protest from Christians unlike the crowds to change anything by force or law.
 - i. Certainly, they lived under a different type of government than we do. But they could have gathered a mob but they did not. That’s not how we carry out our mission.
 - ii. And it’s worth noting: the most powerful and oppressive governments throughout history, have not stopped Christians from speaking the gospel and making disciples.
 - iii. Our mission is to share the gospel and helping those who believe grow into mature disciples of Jesus.
 - iv. Obviously, within this mission we love others in many ways and we should. But the greatest love is to give them Jesus.
 - 2. God is on mission to remake the world. He will bring perfect peace. There will never be a disturbance in his Kingdom. There will be no temples of Artemis or chants to her from the crowds. The new heavens and the new earth are the work of God. Our mission is to share the gospel and those who believe enter God’s Kingdom forever healed.

- b. But for now, there is opposition. Before Paul leaves, v. 23 states that a great disturbance arose concerning the Way. The spread of the gospel has caught the attention of those who do not believe in the Way.
- i. The Way is shorthand for talking about the Kingdom of risen Lord Jesus and his way.
 1. It points to the singularity of our hope in Jesus and oneness and purpose of God's mission.
 - ii. In so doing, you can hear the rub already. The world says there are many ways but Jesus says, "I am the only way."
 1. Do you believe in more than one way to heaven? If so, you will never disturb anybody. And that could be eternally bad for them never being disturbed.
 - iii. A man named Demetrius gets disturbed, there in v. 23, and he is the match that starts the fire.
 1. Paul is still in Ephesus. Ephesus is the home of the goddess Artemis.
 2. Demetrius is a silversmith who made silver shrines of their goddess.
 - a. People from all over the Roman Empire would travel to Ephesus to see the great goddess in her temple. Like lots of travelers, they wanted a souvenir of sorts.
 - b. The craftsmen would keep the local shops filled with their silver shrines of the temple for people to buy.
 - c. It was especially important during the festival week held once a year to worship the goddess, Artemis. Thousands of people would make the pilgrimage to celebrate.
 - d. Sales for these trinkets is how these silversmiths and craftsmen made a living.
 - i. There was no holy book from Artemis that said, "Instead of making disciples like those Christians, make souvenirs of me."
 - ii. Wherever the idea came from, Demetrius has taken notice of the lack of sales.
 - iv. The response begins with Demetrius gathering his fellow craftsmen to have a talk with them.
 1. There in vv. 25-27 he makes known his concern. (Acts 19:25-27) "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. ²⁶ And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. ²⁷ And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship."
 - a. It is public knowledge that Paul has been sent by God to make disciples of all nations.
 - i. They know that Paul has persuaded many in Ephesus and almost all of Asia with the good news of Christ to follow the Way!
 - ii. They turned from their idol worship to worship the one true and living God through Christ.
 - iii. They say the obvious by quoting Paul: "gods made with hands are not gods."
 1. The truth collided with their world and they are not happy.
 2. Furthermore, if Artemis is indeed a goddess, why does she need to be defended?
 - a. They state that Paul, a mere mortal, is about to bring disrepute to the temple of their great goddess.
 - b. If she can't defend herself; is she real?

- c. Yet, I think they are right in saying that she may even be deposed from her magnificence.
 - i. How did Paul do that? By sharing the good news of Christ not attempting to burn down the temple.
2. Well, Demetrius fans the flame he lights with this statement and the craftsmen become enraged!
 - a. They respond by crying out there in v. 28, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”
 - i. This is so strange to me. If someone does something that belittles God’s glory in front of me or to me, should I just start shouting, “Great is YHWH!” for two hours? Will that fix it?
 - ii. Do I go throughout the city and fill them with confusion?
 - 1. Hey, that Paul fellow over there is said Artemis us not a god. Let’s go demand satisfaction from the magistrates.
 - a. I would suggest that when people of the world belittle God’s glory we respond like this: (2 Tim. 2:23-26) ²³ Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. ²⁴ And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, ²⁵ correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, ²⁶ and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.
 - b. That’s how we respond!
- v. I just want to circle back to Demetrius for just a second.
 - 1. Is Artemis his god? Obviously, we don’t know much about him but it matters how you order things...what you say first is often what is in fact first.
 - a. He mentions his profit and wealth first and then he mentions the great goddess and her majesty.
 - b. I can’t help but think that wealth is what he ultimately loves most.
- c. Let’s take a look at the illegal response of the crowds
 - i. In their rage, there in v. 29 they drag Gaius and Aristarchus off to the theater.
 - 1. They were travel companions of Paul and they are mentioned else where like this:
 - a. From many other scriptures, it seems both had heard the gospel from Paul and had come to faith.
 - b. Indeed, I refers to them as fellow prisoner in Christ! What a lofty title!
 - 2. Paul hears about this there in v. 30 and attempts to enter the theater.
 - a. Yet the disciples would not allow him to go in.
 - i. And interestingly, even some of the Asiarchs who were government officials there in Ephesus but were his friends urged him not to venture into the theater.
 - 1. I think this is worth noting: I don’t think we ought to understand these Asiarchs as believers.
 - 2. Yet, Paul had built a friendship with them and they being aware of the dangerous situation, stopped him from a dangerous

attempt. Yet, fellow believers seek to stand with their brothers whether in life or in death.

- ii. It's interesting to see this inside information about this mob.
 1. Notice there in v. 32, that some were crying out one thing, some another, because the assembly was in confusion, and ***most did not know why they had come together.
 - a. What if a crowd like this could actually demand the government to act on something based on the number of people there?
 - i. When most of them do not even know why they are there, that would be a sad move by a government.
- iii. This information about Alexander seems a little strange
 1. We hardly know what to make of it but it seems clear that this event is very different than the ones we've seen so far.
 - a. Most of the rioting began with the Jews. Now the Gentiles are leading this charge.
 - b. Whatever the Jews were attempting to do, they managed to incite the crowds to cry out with one voice, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" for about two hours.
- iv. At this point the town clerk steps in
 1. You might anticipate this going a particular direction. Yet, I think Luke wants the person he wrote this to as well as us to see something about how Christians carry themselves under Roman law and other governments.
 2. The clerk quieted the crowd there in v. 35.
 - a. He seems to reach them with the absurdity that somehow the world was going to forget that Ephesus was the temple keeper of the great Artemis.
 - i. This is a really good argument though it is false.
 - ii. He easily convinces them that this cannot be denied.
 1. And since this is true, they ought to be quiet and do not rash.
 3. He then addresses the issue of bringing Gaius and Aristarchus by force.
 - a. "There was no formal crime with which Paul and his companions could be charged. They had the right to their religion as long as they did not act physically against the temple. Since no overt act had taken place, the official wanted the community to maintain the status quo on these religious matters. The remarks suggest Paul and his companions were innocent of any civil crime." (NET note)
 4. The clerk then instructs Demetrius and the craftsmen how to handle this legally.
 - a. The courts are open and there are proconsuls too.
 - b. Take your complaints to them.
 5. Notice who is in the wrong according to the town clerk.
 - a. There in v. 40, "We really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.
 - b. The world will demand that Christians are doing things that are wrong even by means of illegal riots.
 - c. The crowd is dismissed.

V. Response

- a. I want to end with this. If you were looking carefully, you might have noticed that in this story, only God the Spirit in mention ONE TIME.
 - i. There was a lot of praises to Artemis. They even chanted that for two hours. Two hours to a false god.
 - ii. How does that make you feel?

1. Are you sad that God is being robbed of his rightful glory and praise? If not, why?
 2. Are you heartbroken to know that these people and many of our neighbors and even among our family do not follow Jesus. And I mean they are not a people who take up their cross and follow the King.
 3. Isn't hard to watch people go to such length to save their god of money? The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. They cannot serve two masters. If Artemis were real, she needed to be jealous for her glory because her followers were the ones diminishing it.
- b. Who is really the danger?
- i. "A subtlety occurs in the text here at the end of the story. In v. 27 Demetrius argued that Paul was a danger to Ephesus. In v. 40 the clerk clarifies where the real danger lay—not with Paul but from the unruly Ephesians." (Polhill 414)
 - ii. The danger is in follow the world and not THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE—JESUS!
 - iii. "The ultimate reason we live confidently in a hostile world is that Jesus Christ has prevailed over our greatest enemies: sin, guilt, Satan, and death. In Christ we are invincible, for Jesus was raised bodily, and we now united to him by faith. Our future could not be any better, whatever adversity washes over us in this fallen world."