

# WE ARE SENT

LESSONS FOR TODAY FROM THE EARLY CHURCH

## Growth Group Curriculum Week 7 – October 24, 2021 – Acts 19:23-41

**Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.**

One of the interesting facts about the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that it moved quickly from the smaller villages and towns to large, significant cities. Jesus, with the exception of being in Jerusalem, spent most of his time in smaller communities. Yet, the book of Acts tells us that Paul visited major metropolitan communities like Athens, Corinth and Ephesus and it was in these communities that thousands of people came to faith and then began to travel and share with other communities the message of hope that is found in Jesus.

Athens was the intellectual center of the ancient world. It was the birthplace of democracy. Corinth commanded the trade routes in all directions, north and south by land, and east and west by sea. Ephesus was known as the “market of Asia Minor.” It also housed the Temple of Artemis which was considered to be one of the seven wonders of the world.

Our text for today describes a riot that took place in Ephesus in regards to “the Way.” Along with being called Christians in Antioch, followers of Jesus were also known as people of “the Way.”

The issue in Ephesus was that people were turning away from Artemis and following Jesus. And what that meant was that the financial trade that was associated with selling Artemis artifacts and trinkets had taken a major hit. People were not buying those things any longer and were using their resources in ways that were honoring of God.

The Christian faith and culture are at odds in Ephesus. Though Demetrius appears to make it an issue around loyalty to Artemis, the real issue is that this is costing him and others money. Soon the Jewish believers were embroiled in the dispute, but few in Ephesus would have understood the difference between the Jewish and Christian faith.

One of the things that Luke attempts to do, in the book of Acts, is to show that the Roman Empire really should not have an issue with Paul or the Christian faith. In Corinth, the pro-counsel had



refused to hear the Jewish charges, and in Ephesus, the town clerk argued that the Ephesians were simply being too emotional and that the Christians were ultimately innocent. Though the Christian faith disrupted the culture in some ways, it did not suggest tearing down the leadership structure of the Roman Empire.

## Exploring the Text

Acts 19:23-41

<sup>23</sup> About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. <sup>24</sup> A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. <sup>25</sup> He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: “You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. <sup>26</sup> And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. <sup>27</sup> There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.”

<sup>28</sup> When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

<sup>29</sup> Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul’s traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theater together. <sup>30</sup> Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. <sup>31</sup> Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater.

<sup>32</sup> The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. <sup>33</sup> The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander to the front, and they shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. <sup>34</sup> But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”

<sup>35</sup> The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: “Fellow Ephesians, doesn’t all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? <sup>36</sup> Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to calm down and not do anything rash. <sup>37</sup> You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. <sup>38</sup> If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. <sup>39</sup> If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. <sup>40</sup> As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it.” <sup>41</sup> After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.



## Questions

*If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.*

- 1) Our text describes a riot where a large group of people are stirred up. Have you ever been a part of a large crowd where you have felt uncomfortable? Attended a large concert or event where you felt “overwhelmed by the crowd?”
- 2) Why do the silversmiths see the message of Jesus as a threat (vs. 23-27)? Does the gospel present a similar threat today? If so, how?
- 3) How would you define the word “idol?” We don’t have people carrying around silver images of Artemis, but what are the idols of our own society?
- 4) Artemis was the Greek name for the Roman goddess Diana. In the past a meteorite had smashed into the surface of the earth somewhere near Ephesus, and the local people had regarded it as a gift from heaven. The temple of Artemis was built and there appear to be very few places in Ephesus that were not influenced by Artemis. Yet the gospel message created an obstacle. What are some of the biggest obstacles you see facing the Gospel in today’s culture?
- 5) It has been said that followers of Jesus should be “in” the world, but not “of” the world. What do you think this means? Do you agree with it? Based on what you have heard so far in the book of Acts, how would the early church leaders have responded to “being in the world, but not of the world?”
- 6) This account shows how the gospel can disrupt the normal customs, values, and beliefs of a society and even its economy. Do you think the message of Jesus still does this and if so, how have you seen that working itself out?
- 7) The message of Jesus certainly faced obstacles in Ephesus. Yet in our own personal lives we have to face our own obstacles. Share about an obstacle you are currently facing and how your growth group can be praying for you.

