

“Why are you here today?” (32)

I heard a story about a big, mean lion who met a monkey in the jungle. The lion pounced on the poor monkey and said, "Who is king of the jungle?" The frightened monkey replied, "You are, O mighty lion." So the lion let him go. The next animal the lion met was a zebra. He pounced on it and roared, "Who is king of the jungle?" "You are, O mighty lion." So the lion let him go. The lion next met an elephant and asked the same question. The elephant grabbed the lion, twirled him around, and then threw him 50 feet. The lion picked himself up and huffed, "Just because you don't know the answer is no reason to get so rough."

And I guess the point of the story is that everyone both present and past have to come to the conclusion that there really is only One king and His Name is Jesus. He's the one who is ruler over all; He's the one who possesses authority over all. And the last time we were together we saw very powerfully that the Name of Jesus was the Name in which all people should fear. Even the evil spirit in Acts 19 knew this and they only feared the Name of Jesus.

And so after asking 'Who are you'? The evil spirit beat up some Jewish men who were trying miss-use the power of Christ. We catch up with Luke's report to Theophilus in Acts 19:17-22 "When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honour. Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas. In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power. After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. "After I have been there," he said, "I must visit Rome also." He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer."

Luke tells us that since an irreverent use of the name of Jesus brought on this attack by the evil spirit which we looked at last time; both Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus were moved to reverent awe for the authority of Jesus. You see loved ones when a person sees Jesus in His proper light, you can't help but be in awe. In awe of His holiness and righteousness. And when a person sees Jesus like that they are going to bow down and recognise His authority.

But notice what they did when they submitted to Christ, they repented. And their repentance is very visible in the fact that many Christians, along with others who submitted to the authority of Christ, confessed their previous evil deeds and involvement in the magical arts. Their repentance was further illustrated in the fact that books costing some 50,000 pieces of silver were publicly thrown into a pile and burned.

And so from that point forward, the gospel grew in a great way and conquered the hearts of many in the region. And it was at the end of this great period of growth, that Luke tells us that Paul mapped out plans to go through Macedonia and Achaia on the way to Jerusalem. Paul eventually wants to go to Rome and so he sent Timothy and Erastus on to Macedonia while he personally stayed in Asia.

But let me ask you; is there a sin in your life which needs to be confessed to God? Is there a sin in your life which needs to be burned in a fire? Maybe it's the sin of gossip, maybe it's the sin of lying, maybe it's the sin of sexual immorality, or maybe it's the sin of worry. But does that sin weigh heavy on your heart?

An open-air preacher was telling the old, old story, when a thoughtless youth rapped out, "You tell us about the burden of sin. I feel none." Then he flippantly added, "How much does sin weigh? Eighty pounds? Ten pounds?" The preacher answered, "Tell me, if I put a 400 pound weight on the chest of a dead man, would he feel it?" "No, because he is dead," answered the youth. The preacher responded, "And the man who feels no load of sin is dead spiritually." The lad's remarks only proved what he was. The Scriptures call it "Dead in trespasses and sins" in Ephesians 2:1.

Do you feel the burden of your sins? Is it time to rid yourself of the sin in your life? Ephesians 4:31 "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." Is there something in your life that you need God to help you with? Colossians 3:7+8 "You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips." Is there an area of your life before you became a Christian that you just struggle with today? 1 Peter 2:1 "Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind".

You see Luke told us that the church grew **after** repentance took place. Not before or during but **after**. And I believe that the same principle applies to the church today. If we want to grow as a congregation, we first need to repent of the sins which dominate our lives. And so I would like for us to take a moment this morning to confess those sins and struggles to God.

I know we usually pray after the sermon but today I would like for us to quietly confess our sins to God and ask Him to help us overcome our sinful struggles. Because John says in **1 John 1:9** **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."** **Let's pray.**

Luke continues his report to Theophilus, and he tells us that while all that confessing and repentance is taking place. While the church is growing, he goes on to tell us about a riot in the city of Ephesus. **Acts 19:23-27** **"About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: "Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. 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 man-made gods are no gods at all. 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. When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"**

Luke tells us that while Timothy and Erastus were away, a man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made shrines of Diana, or Artemis, began to stir people up against Christianity. He called together the other members of his craft, reminding them that their wealth came from making silver idols. He truthfully reported that Paul's preaching had impacted people in Ephesus and throughout Asia. He said that Paul had declared idols made with hands were not gods, to the point of destroying their business and causing Diana to fall into disrepute.

And so his words enraged the mob and they began to shout, **"Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"** Now we can understand why these people were upset. **Imagine if you had a successful business and someone came along and more or less put your business at risk?** His business was more precious than truth. His business was more precious than his soul.

Jesus tells a parable about that **doesn't He?** **Matthew 19:16-24** **"Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honour your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbour as yourself.'" "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."**

When push comes to shove its only when you seriously search your heart will you find out what is more important in your life. You know loved ones we search and try to find riches in all the wrong places. That home you own and live in can be lost. That car you drive can break down and be unable to be repaired. Your husband or wife or children can be lost in a moment because of their or someone else's recklessness. Because everything and everyone you see around you today are temporary except for the souls who belong to Christ.

These idols makers were more concerned about their temporary riches than they were concerned about the true eternal riches which can only be found in Christ Jesus. Paul said to the church in Philippi in **Philippians 1:21**, **"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."** These idol makers said, **"For them to live is making money from idols and to die is tragic."** And so everyone in Ephesus is upset that this apostle named Paul whom they thought was trying to ruin their business.

But in all reality he was trying to save their souls. But they were so offended by such a message that Luke goes on and tells us in **Acts 19:27-34** **"Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's travelling companions from Macedonia, and rushed as one man into the theatre. Paul wanted to appear before the crowd,**

but the disciples would not let him. Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theatre. The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. The Jews pushed Alexander to the front, and some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defence before the people. But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

Luke says the whole city came together to see what was happening. And along the way, they seized two Macedonian travel companions of Paul, Gaius and Aristarchus. But Paul wanted to go to the people, but the brethren wouldn't allow it. Even some of the Asian officials who were his friends also pleaded with him not to enter the theatre.

Now it's interesting that Luke says "that many in the crowd didn't even know why they were there." It's also interesting when you speak to some who profess to be Christians about why they attend a certain 'church'. Some say that they like the preacher, some say they have always gone to 'church'. Some say they enjoy listening to the band that helps them in their worship.

But let me ask you, [why are you here today?](#) Worship that is accepted by God is a privilege unique to the Christian. [1 Peter 2:4+5](#) "As you come to him, the living Stone-rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him- you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

You see Peter tells us that it's not a right to worship God because we are permitted to offer acceptable worship only by the grace of God. And it is disheartening when children of God deliberately reject this privilege and stay away from the public assembly which God has ordained for His glory and our good. [Have you ever thought about the significance of worship?](#)

Let me share with you just a few thoughts of the significance of worship. [Worship is obedience to a divine command; it's also a means of nourishing the spirit. Worship assists in achieving spiritual growth and it encourages others in their spiritual development. Worship shows the world where our priorities are and it is one means of expressing our love for God. It is an avenue that God has provided by which I can praise His name and offer spiritual sacrifices. It is a way of showing our thanksgiving to God for all He has done for us. Worship is a period of communion with God with the world shut out entirely. And finally worship is an experience that should make the heart of every Christian very glad.](#)

Loved ones, as Christians we should know why we are here today and why it is important to be here every Lord's Day. Some people in Ephesus didn't even know why they were in that theatre. And now Ephesus is in an uproar and when some Jews singled out Alexander to make a defence and the people found out he was a Jew, the crowd shouted, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

And so after a period of two hours of shouting Luke tells in [Acts 19:34-41](#) "The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Men of Ephesus, 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? Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to be quiet and not do anything rash. You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of today's events. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it." After he had said this, he dismissed the assembly."

Luke says that the city clerk silenced the crowd and appealed for reason and a lawful approach to the matter. Here was a man who knew how to reason even with a mob. He said, no one could deny Ephesus was the guardian of Diana. And he proposed that Demetrius and his colleagues make their case before the authorities. That is if they had a case in the first place.

And when the facts were presented, he recognised that the disciples didn't steal from the temples and they didn't blaspheme their goddess. And so when he realised they had done nothing wrong, he warned the mob that such an assembly might be questioned by the Roman government and had no choice but to quietly dismiss the crowd.

It's amazing just how quickly a chaotic situation can be made calm when people are willing to reason together. So many church fights and splits and personal agendas would be laid to rest if people would only reason together. In fact God says in [Isaiah 1:18](#), "Come now, let us reason together."

[Have you ever tried to discuss something that you knew and they knew was a reasonable discussion?](#) But these people can only see one side of a discussion and their reasoning is always right no matter what you say. These people who act this way are lacking the ability to reason and to listen to reason. Reasoning together involves more than one person. Reasoning together, means just that, we reason together.

In other words we respectfully listen to what each other is saying, think about what we are both saying and weigh it up with what the scriptures teach. That's reasoning together. And when we do that, the result will always be the same. We can part company quietly and without any further fuss.

[In the film Gladiator, Russell Crow plays the part of a Roman General named Maximus Decimus Meridius and at the very start of the film when he is getting his army to fight against the heathens, he says to his men, "What we do in life echoes in eternity."](#)

And loved ones that is so true. Whatever decision we make in life is going to be echoed in eternity. That's why it's important for us to share the good news about Jesus with as many people as we can. If people choose to live for Christ, that will be echoed in eternity by living with Christ for eternity. But if people refuse to live for Christ then that too will be echoed in eternity by living without Christ but with the devil and his angels in hell.

Your destiny is your choice, I pray you choose wisely. May God bless us in our efforts to reason with other people. May God bless us in our efforts to repent of our sins and live a life which is pleasing to Him. And may God bless our efforts in trying to persuade the world that everything they see and possess today and tomorrow is just temporary.