

A. SERMON SLIDES

The Gospel at War with Idols
Acts 19:23-41

About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. 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. 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."

When they heard this they were enraged and were crying out, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" So the city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed together into the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul's companions in travel. But when Paul wished to go in among the crowd, the disciples would not let him. And even some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent to him and were urging him not to venture into the theater.

Now some cried out one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd. But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours they all cried out with one voice, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Artemis, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky? Seeing then that these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. For you have brought these men here who are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of our goddess. If therefore Demetrius and the craftsmen with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another. But if you seek anything further, it shall be settled in the regular assembly. For we really are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion." And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

B. GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Read Acts 19:23-41. Utilize the 4 questions around the text to better understand it. What stands out to me? What are the questions I have of the text? Is there anything speaking to me or my community to apply? Where do we see Jesus?

2. What is a good working definition of idolatry? How did the ancients practice idolatry, and how do we partake today?

3. What are some ways to discover our own attachments to idols? What are the ways we can discover our worship of idols today?

4. Why do idols "need" us and why/how do we "need" them?

5. Why is it hard to destroy our worship of idols? What is the difficult paradox of destroying idols? (If idols are good things made to be ultimate things, how does one "die" to family, children, work, hobbies, sports, etc. appropriately?)

6. Think about this and talk about it.

What things tell us that we are loved because we are valuable, and what things tell us we are valuable because we are loved.

(Breakdown: Deuteronomy 7:7,8...says God does not love us because of ANYTHING we are or have done...but simply because He loves us. That is the most powerful love. If your spouse says that they love you because....beauty, humor, competency, money, hair, fingers, toes, grace...whatever....it only makes us feel good in a moment, but actually causes fear and anxiety. What if the spouse grows old, loses hair, gets sick and becomes nastier instead of funnier, gets in an accident, loses money, doesn't grow in grace, etc.???)

The only way to break an idol is to find a love that says..."I love because I love you, because I love you, because I love you....it will never change because I chose you, and will I never unchoose you. There's nothing you did to get my love, and nothing you can do to lose my love."

7. Prayer for the destruction of idols in our lives. Praise to God for loving us.