

Demetrius, The Shop Steward

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[0 : 0 0] well thank you uh there's a fellow called pete hein who does groups and uh groups are always illustrated by a fellow sitting here this is the world and this is him sitting here and the group reads something to the effect that as he sits here while the world turns through space uh it reads i'd like to know what this whole show is all about before it's out and uh the purpose i have in mentioning that is that life is a very dynamic process and uh we uh we're all caught up in the dynamism of it but there are moments of reflection in which we stop and say what is this all about uh it's helpful perhaps to create the background for what i have to say today by looking at the general strike that is on in canada right now reading some of the billboards that are the placards that people are carrying that zero percent won't pay the rent which is uh good it's not profoundly philosophical but it is pragmatic and uh delivers a message uh i like the one which reads gst seven percent inflation six percent our offer zero percent there's logic to that too and uh you can grasp it quickly and that's one of the problems that i think we're facing when we uh are looking um as we are in this this between now and christmas at some of the uh pen portraits of people in the gospel according to saint luke and in the acts of the apostle and the man whose pen portrait we want to look at today is demetrius about whom he and had just read to us but i i need to go back as it were to that distinguished uh roman uh aristocrat who uh stands there and contemplates and whose name is uh theo that is god lover theophilus and that this whole thing this whole acts and and luke's gospel were written for the benefit of this man that he might come to know the truth about the things about which he's been informed now we live in the information age so being informed is something that we spend a lot of our day involved in but the difficulty of our world is that uh do we know the truth about the truth about the things about which we are being informed or is there some danger that life gets reduced to the level where you are constantly subject to the process of being informed but it never leads anywhere even monday night football which goes on week after week after week finally comes to the super bowl you know and uh similarly with the canada cup it goes on and on as long as they can make it go but then it comes to the finals and uh that's when a lot of you i'm sure tune in at that point

the the danger of knowledge uh is underlined almost in every page of the new testament where we are told that knowledge puffs up you know it makes it it sort of makes you expand to put on a whole lot of weight mentally and uh but uh love builds up that this knowledge has got to lead to something information has got to point somewhere uh it's all got to come ultimately to some kind of truth uh it uh interests me and i hope doesn't offend your sensibilities to know that the uh fourth chapter of the first book in the bible called genesis says when it is referring to adam having intercourse with his wife it says adam knew eve in other words it was knowledge that consummated in a relationship in fact that uh very offensive four letter word uh the four letters of which i will explain to you only by telling you the acrostic that derives from them is file under carnal knowledge and uh what what it's saying is that uh uh information leads to uh relationship just as paul is concerned here in his visit to ephesus and luke is concerned in writing about it that people having this information will come to the conclusion to which this information points and this information points to the person of christ and the consummation of this process is a faith in jesus christ so that the purpose as i see it of our meeting together on when on wednesdays is that people might come to the knowledge of jesus christ well how do they do that well it was to theophilus that luke wrote he was a uh a senior official of the roman imperial government he himself was not a christian therefore luke and acts you may assume were written for the non-christian world they were written for somebody who was outside the christian church most religious writings that you run into seem to be heavily uh biased towards the believer and uh you really all almost always have to have a fairly serious commitment before you can read it even but this implies no commitment at all this is simply trying to order the information which you have from your experience of life which you have from your experience of religion which you have from having encountered people how you put that knowledge together to figure out what ultimately it means and where it leads to what this whole show is all about and to find that out before it's out so you that's that's what it is and and uh to me it's uh it's very important to understand when we look at the man who is the object of our uh talk today demetrius to see how it was uh that people came to understand when i talked at the beginning about

strikes i think strikes are phenomenal activities great masses of people joining together catching the attention of the media and bringing their cause before the whole of the country now it used to be that that that's the function that parliamentary government was supposed to fulfill that the issues would be brought up in a company of learned and considerate people who would argue them through and make a decision and and uh put that decision into law but um i guess we don't trust the parliamentary system anymore and even though we have courts and we have parliament and we have petitions and we have ombudsmen our society has in a sense regularized and recognized uh as an instrument of uh social engineering i suppose that people will go out on strike to uh to achieve certain goals and uh that in order to do that you have to stir up a whole mass of people who will say this is our right and they in turn will stir up the rest of the people to grant them that right or to deny it to them and that that is a kind of mass confrontation that is created countrywide which truckers meet at the border and you meet at the post office and and you can run into this all over our country at the moment so that's how that is achieved and uh and i'm afraid i don't understand it that's all i i don't really understand how strikes work and how they achieve what they're supposed to achieve but i plead ignorance because i think probably some of you who do understand the process better i i was out this morning and i met a man whose car battery was dead and i was able to valiantly draw drive my car up alongside him put the battery cables on and start his car and he's a man who's as old as i am and he said to me you know that's never happened to me before in all my life well he was ignorant of that experience as i am in a sense very ignorant and outside the process of uh of how strikes work now you may at this point be wondering what on earth is he trying to get at so uh and i'm wondering too but i what i'm trying to get at is the way demetrius got a following and the way paul got a following and if you look at the character of demetrius uh the the portrait that luke has given of him in order to tell theophilus about it uh if you look at that portrait you see uh this is what's happened uh demetrius has become aware that there is a disturbance going on and that this disturbance is about the way it's described as a great disturbance people the the sort of grassroots of the of society was uh wondering uh what was happening as a result of paul's preaching and people were immediately threatened by it and i tried to tell you last week how most people have this kind of concept of christian faith they may not know what it is but they know how it affects them in their business in their uh in their business and social and personal life so that they feel the

effects of the wave of uh of the disturbance which which christian faith can bring to a society and demetrius knew about this he knew that this fellow paul of whom he spoke to his fellow silversmiths and he was considered to be the master of the silversmiths guild probably just for the year that he held office but he said this fellow paul has done us a disservice and what is the disservice he has done uh he paul has convinced people and led them astray he doesn't know what they were convinced about but as far as his idea of how life should be lived these people had gone astray and that was the result of what paul had done now most of us think that anybody who doesn't agree with us has gone astray so it's not uh it's not surprising that uh that demetrius felt that about paul and uh he said that not only has he done this but he's done it in ephesus this city of ours and he's done it throughout the whole province i don't know whether he was exaggerating or not but it's a tremendous tribute to the impact of paul to say that he affected the whole city and not only the whole city but the whole province with what he had done and when uh when demetrius wanted to express to his fellow silversmiths what it was exactly that paul had done he said that paul is contending that god's made with hands by human hands are not gods that you can't produce a god by the exercise of the skill that is in your hands and uh demetrius seemed to think that that was unthinkable but i'm sure the people to whom he saw said it would agree with him and say yeah well if that if you can't make gods how are you going to have them what other way could you have gods except to make them with your own hands what other gods are there which is not really dissimilar from the question that our secular society asks are there any gods beyond the ones that we've made well demetrius was having the same problem and saying uh god's made with hands are not gods and uh he saw the impact of that and his this is the way he in a sense hooked in the silversmiths he said to them the good income we receive is threatened that's where people were prepared to respond at the level of their uh monthly paycheck or whatever it was that uh the good income we receive is threatened but he went on beyond that to give three arguments to demonstrate that the truth was on the side of the silversmiths and uh that those who listened to paul had been led astray and he says three things have happened and if we allow this to continue he said our trade will lose its good name the temple of artemis will be uh discredited and the goddess herself will be robbed of her divine majesty and everybody was shocked you know that our trade our business the work we do that it should uh should uh should that it should be discredited that are the good name of the silversmiths of ephesus of whom the whole world knows that they that that our trade should should suffer the loss of its good name

is unthinkable remember the bottom line was our income is falling but now our trade the name of our trade in our profession is being challenged the second thing is that the temple of artemis will be discredited and the temple of artemis which was in the heart of the city was the thing that held the whole city together when you think about it religion in ephesus in those days is more comparable i would think in our society to something like what do they call it that indie thing that was here a couple of weeks ago i mean uh uh uh or the bc lions you know that they are they're the gladiators of our day or the vancouver canucks uh those kind of events were the events which were to the honor of the gods and in the name of the gods and in which people celebrated the gods and the victories belong to the gods so that that sort of dimension of city life which is so important and so essential the sea festival or the or the uh fireworks or something like that all those things would tend i think in the ancient world to become under the classification of religion so that if in those days you opened your paper to the the sports page it would be entitled religion i think the uh so that that was what was happening and when it said that the temple of artemis will be discredited discredited then something which would tear apart the whole fiber of the city was being accomplished by paul's preaching and that the goddess herself will be robbed of her divine majesty that is the majesty of the god was not something which she had intrinsically it was something which was given to her by her devotees and if that stopped happening and that and among the devotees were the silversmiths then she would be lost so uh demetrius stirred up the crowd and they uh and they started to shout great is artemis of the ephesians they all went out into the streets they all continued to shout they all went up to the head of the road they all gathered 25 000 or more of them in the great amphitheater which was at the end of the street and for two solid hours they chanted great is artemis of the ephesians over and over and over again and that was their response to what paul had been doing let me just show you how paul had done it uh paul made a brief visit to the synagogue in ephesus and was asked to come back and he promised he would come before he came back apollo of alexandria came and spoke to them boldly from the old testament scriptures and uh it was then that two members of the congregation there aquila and priscilla took apollo aside and explained to him what the christian faith actually was about and he went on to corinth and when paul came back he found in ephesus a small community of people who had been baptized in the name of john the baptist and he talked to them and asked them if they knew about jesus and when they heard about jesus they agreed to be baptized in the name of jesus so they were baptized and then paul started to teach and he taught for three months in the synagogue in ephesus at the end of three months he had split the synagogue so that some were for him and some were against him so paul took some leaders of the synagogue the disciples of christ and moved out of the synagogue next door into the hall of tyrannis and there for two years he continued to persuade and to argue and to point out from the

[20 : 22] whole of the scriptures that the christ was jesus that was how he did it and in the course of that he set the wave in motion which swept through the city of ephesus and swept through the province of asia so that now the economy of the land from the point of view of the silversmiths was in danger of being seriously disturbed uh and uh it says of of paul's efforts that all the jews and greeks heard the word of the lord there was a charismatic response there was speaking in tongues there was healing there was exorcism there was book burning there were outward demonstrations of the power of the holy spirit and the whole city was turned upside down so demetrius knew what he was talking about but what i what i'm wondering about in this as you see this portrait you see what paul was trying to do was to convince theophilus to become a christian and what he was demonstrating was that what paul was doing was not contrary to the roman empire what paul was doing had nothing to do with diana of the ephesians even though it was understood to what paul was trying to do was entirely within the realm of law and order which was maintained by the roman empire and what paul was contending about the person of christ was that he was someone whom a respectable upper class roman official might well consider putting his faith and trust in and he did it over a period of almost three years of persuading and arguing and teaching artemia or demetrius was able to produce this profound negative uh rejection of christian faith in about an hour one afternoon and he filled a stadium of 25 000 people i don't know what that has to say about mass evangelism but i think there's a message uh that people have to be deeply persuaded of the truth of the gospel in order that their lives will find a fulfillment in order that they will find out what life is about through coming to put their faith in jesus christ which was what paul wanted the awfulest to do or what luke wanted him to do and why luke wrote this and that my appeal to you is that as you look at people like demetrius and there's a lovely one line in the third epistle of john which refers to a christian whose name is demetrius and scholars are just tantalized by that is this the same man did this man ultimately himself become a christian well i don't think anybody knows but there is some interesting arguments that they've developed to suggest that in fact he did but that paul initiated a process in the proclamation of the gospel of jesus christ addressing it to somebody who was outside the christian faith and asking him would it not be appropriate for you on the basis of all that you have heard and what i'm telling you to put your faith in that same person let me pray our god uh we think of the dynamic of the world in which we live and the thrust and counter thrust of ideas and opinions and actions and pressure we think of the basic reality of our economy and the basic process of of producing wealth in our society and yet we need to know at the very deepest level what it's all about and where it leads our god give us grace that by the application of our minds

and hearts to the word of god as it is presented to us that we might expose ourselves to the possibility in a deeper way of coming to put our faith and trust in jesus christ in whose name we pray amen be kind to one another and make one another welcome and speak to one another and do things like that will you be for your leave which is here New Place emissions

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[27 : 37] Thank you.

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