

Be Sure Of Our Faith

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[0 : 00] which tells the story of the riot at Ephesus. Wonderful story, which I presume you've had read to you this morning.

Have you? No. Well, then you're going to. This is a wonderful story that took place.

Remember last week we talked about how Christ was placarded before the people of Ephesus and they were invited to put their faith and trust in him.

Paul went on preaching and arguing and persuading for more than two years in Ephesus. By the end of the last chapter, we found that people were bringing their magic together, their magic books, and that they were being publicly burned.

And there was a great stir among the people. And you read about that when you turn to verse 23.

[1 : 14] The bottom of page 132 and in verse 23, about that time there arose no little stir concerning the way.

The Christian movement had given rise to a serious disturbance in the equanimity of the life of the city of Ephesus.

And Demetrius, who was a silversmith himself, but perhaps head of the Guild of Silversmiths that year, was deeply disturbed by what had happened.

The Guild of Silversmiths derived most of their income from fashioning likenesses of either the temple of Diana of the Ephesians, or by making things that you wear on silver bracelets, or put on your mantelpiece, or carry as good luck charms hanging from your rear vision mirror in your car. They produced that kind of religious junk for the community, and it was widely believed in and bought by lots of people.

[2 : 30] So the impact of what Paul was doing is recorded in secular history by a letter that was written by a Roman governor of a neighboring state at about this time when he said that the temples are becoming deserted and no offerings are being brought to the shrines of the gods.

So that the result of Paul's arguing and persuading and proclaiming over two and a half years, day in and day out, was that there was an impact on the economy of the community.

And that's a very interesting problem. And so Demetrius, who was... Now, if you want to know what an entrepreneur is, even if you aspire to be an entrepreneur, you want to study this man Demetrius, because he knows how to do it, and you could learn a great deal from him.

And what he did was he gathered the silversmiths together at a union meeting, and he said these things to them. Our prosperity depends on this particular work.

The highest goal for our society is our prosperity, and our prosperity is based on the Temple of Diana of the Ephesians, the tourist trade that is attracted by it, the business trade that is attracted by it.

[4 : 04] It all focuses there, and our prosperity is threatened by what's happening. People are turning away from their devotion to Diana of the Ephesians.

It was obvious that Paul, in his long and patient argument, over a period of more than two years, had changed people's minds.

Demetrius heard Paul's sermon in these terms, because this is what he said was happening. This is what Paul was preaching. Now, a lot of people have no idea what the Christian gospel is, and Demetrius was among them.

What he heard being preached was, gods made with hands are not gods. An utterly unthinkable concept. And he impressed upon the silversmiths of Ephesus how unthinkable that was, that just because they made them with their hands, they weren't gods.

He said, the difficulty this leads us into, as he developed his argument, is our trade might fall into disrepute. It already is beginning to, and the economic indicators are, that next year we won't sell as

many as we sold last year, and the year after that we won't sell as many as we sell this year.
[5 : 18] And so, we're going to be in trouble, unless we change this economic trend that is taking place. And I am an entrepreneur, and I'll tell you how to change it. So, Demetrius goes on, it's not really our trade that I'm worried about.

This is lovely stuff. Listen, it's not our trade that I'm really worried about. It's the Temple of Diana. What if people turned away in disrespect from the Temple of Diana? Shades of Saddam Hussein, that devoutly religious man. It's, here he was seeing the horror of what would happen if this great temple that marked the whole landscape of the city of Ephesus should fall into disrepute.

And not only would the temple fall into disrepute, but the splendor of our goddess might lose its luster. People would no longer be attracted to it.

You see, what a devout and religious man this fellow is becoming. He set out just to try and save his neck economically, but now he's becoming very religious about it.

[6 : 31] And what he says as he goes on is, the whole of Asia worship her indeed. And then in the manner of all religious types, he said, not just Asia, but the whole world.

Isn't that wonderful? He could see that that was what was going to happen, that they will turn away from her whom they are meant to worship.

Well, he got the silversmiths so worked up and so anxious about that that they ran out into the streets and they shouted and they demonstrated in some way so that the whole city became conscious that something was happening.

And they were shouting, great is Diana of the Ephesians and the people gathered together and mob psychology took over.

The whole city turned out to see what was going on. And there was a main road which ran from the port and it was paved with marble.

[7 : 39] It ran and it was 36 feet wide. It was a main thoroughfare in the middle of Ephesus and the people streamed into this main thoroughfare and they went along the main thoroughfare to the theater which would hold 24,000 people or somewhere between that and 50,000.

Nobody knows exactly how many it would hold even though I think the remains of it are still there. So that... And the mob just took over.

They didn't know what was happening. They only knew that something was happening and they picked up the cry which was the cry which probably was a chant used in the worship of Diana of the Ephesians.

Great is Diana of the Ephesians. Great is Diana of the Ephesians. And everybody picked it up and they shouted it and shouted it and shouted it. The same kind of thing that you see on your TVs every week.

People coming in huge numbers and chanting and chanting and chanting. Well, Demetrius is the one who's shown us how to do that kind of thing. They had to have some focus for the demonstration so they picked up two men, Gaius and Aristarchus and they were traveling companions of St. Paul and they intended to make them examples before the whole of the crowd even though they weren't Jews.

[9 : 10] They were Christians from Macedonia. So they picked them up and they were carried by the mob into the theater and then the Asiarchs are mentioned.

And the Asiarchs are the president, chief executive officers of the most lucrative businesses in the whole of the province of Asia on whose shoulders would fall the responsibility every year of holding the Olympic Games or some festival of games in one of the cities of Asia.

And they personally would have to pick up responsibility for the cost of this. And so they knew how you handled crowds and they knew a lot about crowds because they had to gather them when it was the great dignity conferred on them that they were to put on the games.

It was back in the days of private enterprise. Now it's all done by Mulsons. But in those days, it fell on these very wealthy people to run the games.

And these men, this is the most, one of the peculiar parts of this story is that they told Paul to keep away from the theater.

[10 : 30] Paul in his forthright manner was ready to walk right into a crowd of 24,000 and to use it as a chance to preach. They said, don't go near the place. Interesting, isn't it, that these politically prominent, wealthy and prestigious people were friends of St. Paul.

I hope that's a great comfort to the wealthy congregation of St. John Shaughnessy. And I want you to know that they somehow understood him.

And they understood what he was doing and perhaps had begun to hear what he was saying so that they were concerned to protect him. Well, Paul didn't go.

A wonderful rabble was created in the theater. People were shouting. They were at sixes and sevens. The place was total chaos. And nobody could bring, you know, they didn't have the advantage of microphones or loudspeaker systems.

So they couldn't bring the crowd under any kind of control. But one of the rather more zealous Jewish members of the Ephesian community stood up in order to say, it's those Christians.

[11 : 46] It's not us Jews. And, you know, the same way that we say it's them fundamentalists or them Pentecostals that are causing all the problems. It's not us, good Anglican. The, uh, but the crowd didn't hear it.

Uh, the crowd just saw that he was a Jew and they presumed that he was one of the people because the Christian community had started with the Jewish community. And so they started to shout and chant, great is Diana of the Ephesians, one after another.

And they kept it up for two solid hours of this. and, uh, it's, uh, uh, because, because one of them had stood up and tried to defend, uh, the Jewish community from that.

It's, it's an amazing picture, you know. I, I delighted in the fact that the truckers stopped the traffic on the 401 in Toronto, uh, not long ago. Uh, it's interesting to see what the aborigine communities can do when they want to stop up a highway.

I've always wondered what would happen if the hydro employees decided to cut the power or if the Bell Canada people decided to cut the communication line in order to win their rights.

[13 : 00] But you can see the power of a group like this. And of course that's become a science in our society nowadays to work this way. And this has become a demonstrable form of government in our society that we are in some ways ruled by such people doing such things.

Well, what happened next was that the town clerk got up. And the town clerk must have been, it must have been roughly equivalent to the tanks rolling into Tiananmen Square because, uh, he apparently got the hearing of people.

He must have been a very masterful, uh, crowd control officer because he got the whole crowd to shut up and to listen to him.

and then he gave them the wonderful picture of how he saw what was happening. And, uh, he, uh, he began in a courteous way by saying, gentlemen of Ephesus.

And I would presume that they were mostly gentlemen that were gathered. I can't imagine the ladies getting involved in this, but maybe feminists would insist that they were there as well.

[14 : 10] But I, I, uh, I won't debate that. There was a large crowd. He addressed them as gentlemen of Ephesus.

And he said, we all know, don't we? You know, this is a great politician. You, Demetrius is a, is a, is a great entrepreneur. Here's a great politician coming in front of you.

Uh, gentlemen, we all know that the city of Ephesus is guardian to the temple of Diana. You know, that we are the, we are the people who keep this temple for the whole world to come here and worship.

A, a, a great concept. And then he told them that the ancient prehistoric stone which was reputed to have come down from the sky and which was the, the, the, the, mark the presence of Diana in the midst of this magnificent temple which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

And he, there's a nice little touch here, he was a Roman official. And he told them where Diana had come from. He came, she came from Jupiter.

[15 : 22] He was the sky god who was the head man in Rome, you know. So that, uh, the, uh, there was a kind of connection, you see, that the, the, uh, the religious cult which was in Ephesus which was Diana of the Ephesians was subject to the, the great god Jupiter who was of course in Rome and whose temple was in Rome.

And so just as, uh, the god in Rome had given, uh, the, uh, the goddess of Ephesus, so the authority of Rome was to be, uh, in control of the city of Ephesus.

So, the, uh, he, he challenged the mob and told them that, uh, they had one of two things they could do.

Uh, he said, Paul and his disciples have not plundered the temple and as I told you last week, the temple was a great banking center for the whole world because, uh, great wealth had been, had been deposited there by kings and great wealthy men from the whole world because they thought the temple of Diana was a safe place to keep things and, uh, the town clerk said, Paul hasn't plundered the treasure of the temple nor has he, in fact, spoken blasphemy against the goddess Diana or, he said, their courts are open, the magistrates are there ready to hear any complaints you have.

So, if you have a complaint, Demetrius, take it to the magistrates and if you are not satisfied with them, then you know that there is a meeting of the town council every three weeks and you can take it to the town council.

[17:11] And then in the manner of men of power, he said, if what we're doing today, word of this gets out to the authorities, you know what's going to happen. And that was very sobering to the crowd and they decided to go home for supper because they recognized what had happened to them.

He dismissed the unlawful assembly without benefit of tanks or machine guns as far as we know. Well, that is the context in which the gospel was being preached.

You see, the religion of prosperity, the religion of law, the religion of common belief, you know, that we can create gods by our own willing and voluntary consent.

All those things were prevalent when Paul came among them and preached the gospel to them.

The religions, then, that you have in Ephesus are the religion of law and order that was respected by the town clerk and which was administered by the town clerk.

And a lot of people think that that's what religion is basically for, to maintain law and order. There is the religion of the crowd.

[18:37] You see, there's something very interesting about this. If you make a comparison between the fact that Paul had sat and talked to them and taught them and argued with them and persuaded them for two years and that that had resulted in the gospel going through the whole of the province of Asia.

Demetrius had a following of 24,000 people within an hour. A lot of people like instant religion that way, you know, something that you can suddenly get mad at and that you can rally.

Fitzsimmons Ellison says that, you know, when you go to a crowd of people and you can find in them what he calls the pattern of their discontent, their anger, their guilt, and you can appeal to them and on the basis of that anger and guilt they will respond immediately to you and they will tear things down, they will overthrow things, they will do violent things simply because you have been able to connect with the deep-seated anger and guilt which they have and you offer them a way out. You see how in that sense that kind of religion is very attractive to human beings.

We could stir people up by a simple appeal to their own anger or to their own sense of guilt or their own sense of frustration or their own longing for power or their own sense of wanting to do violence.

[20:12] response. You can quickly appeal to that and get a quick response. But that's not what Paul had done. Paul had patiently argued and persuaded for a period of two years in order to bring them up against the reality of who God is and who they were in relationship to him.

Now last week I tried to explain to you that the difference between what Paul was doing and what you see happening here in Ephesus is the difference between people who see God on their terms rather than who see themselves on God's terms.

blessings. And when you preach the gospel of the God who created and sustains the world, has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, has made himself known to us by the Holy Spirit, what Paul was arguing and persuading for, towards, was that they would begin to see themselves as God saw them and that they would come to a place of repentance and faith and trust in Christ, seeing the reality of who God was and the claim that he made on their life.

God, the religion of Ephesus, uses religion and uses the concept of God basically to maintain law and order and it doesn't matter what you believe as long as it does maintain law and order, basically as a means of achieving a prosperity by creating a consumer society which will purchase the things that you make available to them.

So you see the profound difference and it was in this community which is so like in a sense our own community and the tensions of our own community, the desire on the one hand for law and order, the chaos of mob control on the other hand, the desire for gratification on the other hand, the desire for prosperity and the desire for some way of releasing the pent-up frustration and anger and guilt

that lies deep in all of us and which breaks out from us under the proper circumstances as it did from the Ephesians on this day when Demetrius led them into this mob rule.

[22 : 36] And so I guess having said last week I didn't want to argue with you, this time week I guess I'm back to arguing with you because it's so much in my nature but I want you to see what the first verse says.

About that time there arose no little stir concerning the way. People saw that the whole values, the whole value system of their society was undermined by the preaching of the gospel.

That all the things that they had believed in were in fact unworthy of their belief and that their whole life needed to change in response to the God who had made himself known to them in Jesus Christ. And so when we gather as we do this morning for this service of worship and for to partake together of the Holy Communion, what in fact we are doing is not seeking to establish law and order in our society, not seeking to raise up some mob to affect the issues of our day, but what we're seeking to do is to come into the place of faith and obedience to Jesus Christ and in that place of faith and obedience to honor and worship him and to bring ourselves into a right relationship with God through Christ and a right relationship with one another in the community of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[24 : 22] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Let's pray together.

Let's pray together. If you'll take your common prayer book and keep your finger on page 88, we'll conclude the intercessions this morning with a prayer from that page.

We begin by praying and interceding for the world, the world of our own hearts, the world of our circumstances, the world in which we live, for the nations of the world that are caught in strife.

And particularly for those who work for truth and for good in these places. O thou who compassed the whole earth with thy most merciful favor, and willest not that any of thy children should perish, we call down thy blessing this day upon all who are striving toward the making of a better world.

We pray, O God, especially for all those who are valiant for truth. For all who are working for purer and juster laws.

[26 : 14] For all who are working for peace between the nations. For all those engaged in healing disease and in the relief of poverty.

For all who work for the rescue of the fallen. For the restoration of the broken unity of thy holy church.

We pray for all who preach the gospel, especially against adversity. For those who bear witness to Christ in foreign lands.

And especially, we remember this morning, those who suffer for the sake of righteousness. Cast down, O Lord, all the forces of cruelty and wrong.

Create all selfish and worldly-minded schemes. And prosper all that is conceived among us in the spirit of Christ.

[27 : 16] And carried out to the honor of his name. Lord in thy mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray this morning for our own parish. For the next two weeks especially. Which you'll find out about later in the service, I expect.

With these words. Almighty God, in whose hand lies the destiny of humankind and the nations. As well as the destiny of this parish of St. John's.

Let not all our hopes perish. Nor all our sacrifices be in vain. O holy and life-giving Spirit, enable us by thy grace to root out from our common life the bitterness of any ancient wrong.

The thirst to avenge any betrayal of long ago. Any injury. Save us from the tyranny of history. And set us free in a new obedience to serve each other in the present hour.

[28 : 30] Accepting the redemption wrought for us, we believe that all our sins of yesterday are covered by thy mercy. Grant us therefore grace and courage to give and receive the forgiveness which alone can heal this day's wounds.

Draw us, O Lord, toward loving kindness and guide us into the way of peace. Lord, in thy mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for rest. We pray for peace. Pray for the right use of this Sabbath day.

These words written by George Herbert. When God at first made man, having a glass of blessing standing by, let us, said he, pour on him all we can.

Let the world's riches, which dispersed lie, contract into a span. So strength first made a way.

[29 : 42] Then beauty flowed. Then wisdom, honor, pleasure. When almost all was out, God made a stay, perceiving that alone of all his treasure, rest in the bottom lay.

For if I should, said he, bestow this jewel also on my creature, he would adore my gifts instead of me, and rest in nature, not the God of nature.

So both should losers be. Let him be. Yet let him keep the rest, but keep them with repining restlessness.

Let him be rich and weary, that at least if goodness lead him not, yet weariness may toss him to my breast.

O Lord, we praise and magnify thy name that thou hast set thy seal upon our inmost being, not leaving us to our own poor and petty selves, but calling us to be heirs of thy kingdom.

[30 : 56] We bless thee for that knocking at our heart's door that warns us of thy waiting presence. We bless thee for thy hand upon us, for the sure knowledge that however we may falter and fail, yet underneath are thine everlasting arms.

Together from page 88. We pray the prayer in the middle of the page. Almighty God, who has promised to hear the petitions of them that ask in thy Son's name, we beseech thee mercifully to incline thine ears to us, to have made now our prayers and supplications unto thee, and grant that those things which we have faithfully asked according to thy will may effectually be obtained to the relief of our necessity and to the setting forth of thy glory.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. We're going to sing now our offertory hymn.

It's number 77. For the beauty of the earth, please stand to sing. Amen. Amen. Let's sing.

Amen. Lead me. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[32 : 39] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Should we bow our heads for prayer.

[36 : 11] Amen. Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High.

And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him up, and everyone whom his Spirit made willing, and they brought the Lord's offering. Lord, we pray that we may use these gifts to your glory, and for the furtherance of your gospel, the way.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please turn to page 78.

Amen. The Lord be with you. And with my spirit.

Lift up your hearts. With the power of the Lord. Let us give thanks unto our Lord God. It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty that we should at all times, and in all places give thanks unto thee, O Lord.

[37 : 32] Holy Father, almighty, everlasting God, creator and preserver of all things. Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we lord and magnify thy glorious name, evermore praising thee and singing.

Holy, holy, holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts.

And with all the company of heaven, we lord and magnify thy glory, and the name of the Lord.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[38 : 43] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and that institute and in his holy gospel command us to continue a perpetual memorial of that his precious death until his coming again.

Hear us, O merciful Father, we most humbly beseech thee. And grant that we, receiving these thy creatures of bread and wine, according to thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may we partake us of his most blessed body and blood.

In the same night that he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he'd break it, and he gave it to his disciples, saying, Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. Likewise, after supper he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins.

[40 : 21] Do this as often as you shall drink it, in remembrance of me. Let us kneel to pray.

The bottom of page 83.

We say together, We do not presume to come to this thy table, O merciful Lord, trusting in our own righteousness, but in thy manifold and great mercies.

We are not worthy so much as to gather up the crumbs under thy table, but thou art the same Lord, whose property is always to have mercy. Grant us therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son, Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood, and that we may evermore run in here, and he in us.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[41 : 39] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[43 : 54] Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.