


A Five-Day Devotional Journey
September 7 - 14, 2008
Acts 19:23-41

“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.”

Matthew 13:33

Riot

1 Serious trouble developed

Read. Acts 19:23-27 NLT

About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way. It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis. He kept many craftsmen busy. He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them as follows:

“Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. But as you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren’t really gods at all. And he’s done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! Of course, I’m not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I’m also concerned that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose its influence and that Artemis—this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout the province of Asia and all around the world—will be robbed of her great prestige!”

Read. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 Message

If it’s only money these leaders are after, they’ll self-destruct in no time. Lust for money brings trouble and nothing but trouble. Going down that path, some lose their footing in the faith completely and live to regret it bitterly ever after.

Think.

- What would you identify as the driving force behind this riot in Ephesus? To what motivations does Demetrius appeal?
- How much sway do the forces of money, pride and fear hold over your life and decisions? What other primal motivators or factors tend to push your buttons and lead you into knee-jerk type reactions? How can we keep these from becoming earthly strings that control us?
- Are you aware of anyone feeling really threatened by you and your faith in Jesus? What happened? How did you respond?

Pray.

Lord, reign more deeply at the center of my soul so that when others are in the throes of panic and upheaval, I may have and be a source of your peace in the midst of it all. Give me firm footing in the faith through times of fear.

Live.

Pray for grace to calm someone who is losing it this week.

Flecks of yeast.

It’s just not the corporate logo I would pick for the kingdom of God. A huge hammer pounding a cosmic spike into a hardened world, shattering it’s resistance...that would do much more nicely. Now it’s true, such images do in fact occur in Scripture. Iron rods smashing into pieces kings and kingdoms like so much pottery. Unquenchable fire consuming a wicked society like dry chaff. Those are icons we can much more readily warm up to and even attempt to enact in our more militant moments.

Simply witness the Crusades.

The trouble is such images picture the direct divine visitations of justice within history rather than prescribing the way of Jesus followers living in the midst of a fallen world. Every generation of believers that has forgotten this has ended up looking just like the rioters in Ephesus. Loud voices, raised fists, slogans chanted by a crowd ready to go to war, stirred up by the unholy combination of religion and greed. It’s a scene played out in that pagan theater — and in one too many cathedrals.

But yeast doesn’t make war on a culture. It silently but quite effectively permeates it over time. There’s a wonderful irony in the fact that Paul had been releasing that kingdom “leaven” right into the heart of Ephesian culture in the lecture hall of the “Tyrant.” Paul was anything but tyrannical. He didn’t “take on Diana” nor try to demonstrate scientifically that her image had most certainly *not* fallen from heaven. He preached a risen Savior named Jesus and presented in bold colors the real life available to all through him. As stated by the town clerk, Paul was no enemy of Diana and her temple, nor did he stand in the way of would be worshippers. He didn’t have to.

Preaching Jesus for two years had been enough to empty her temple courts and dry up business for her trinkets. Another case in point of the power of leaven over that of the battering ram.

2) "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

Read. Acts 19:28-31 NLT

At this their anger boiled, and they began shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. Paul wanted to go in, too, but the believers wouldn't let him. Some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, also sent a message to him, begging him not to risk his life by entering the amphitheater.

Read. Proverbs 19:2, 12 Message

Ignorant zeal is worthless;
haste makes waste.

Mean-tempered leaders are like mad dogs;
the good-natured are like fresh morning dew.

Think.

- What impact did Demetrius' speech have on his listeners? How did this ripple out into the community? How does Luke describe the mood of the city? What did Paul want to do? Who stopped him?
- When have you found yourself caught up in "ignorant zeal"? How readily do you tend to get caught up in the latest fears and worries of others around you? How do you know when to speak and when to be silent?
- At home, school, or at church do you tend to "stir the pot"? Be "like fresh morning dew"? Just try to stay out of trouble? Or what? Why?

Pray. Lord, give me an instructed tongue that speaks with informed zeal about the things that really matter most to you.

Live. Pray this week about what it means, practically speaking, to be a peacemaker right where you live.

4) You should stay calm

Read. Acts 19:35-37 NLT

At last the mayor was able to quiet them down enough to speak. "Citizens of Ephesus," he said. "Everyone knows that Ephesus is the official guardian of the temple of the great Artemis, whose image fell down to us from heaven. Since this is an undeniable fact, you should stay calm and not do anything rash. You have brought these men here, but they have stolen nothing from the temple and have not spoken against our goddess."

Read. Proverbs 18:13, 15 Message

Answering before listening
is both stupid and rude.

Wise men and women are always learning,
always listening for fresh insights.

Think.

- How is the mayor able to catch the crowd's attention? What is his bottom line counsel to them? What reasons does he give for them staying calm? What does he say about the believers seized by the crowd?
- What are the key qualities needed by someone who would help mediate a dispute? What specific things does an effective mediator need to do to help bring peace? How do you see these things in the mayor of Ephesus?

Pray.

Holy Spirit, you are my Comforter and my Counselor. Help me to really see people when they are at odds, and help me to partner with you in bringing creative solutions through your insight when others are stuck. Give me fresh heart for people where they are.

Live.

Be a presence of peace in a sticky situation this week. Consciously pray for wisdom before you speak into it.

3) The people were all shouting

Read. Acts 19:32-34 NLT

Inside, the people were all shouting, some one thing and some another. Everything was in confusion. In fact, most of them didn't even know why they were there. The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander forward and told him to explain the situation. He motioned for silence and tried to speak. But when the crowd realized he was a Jew, they started shouting again and kept it up for two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

Read. Proverbs 18:6-7 Message

The words of a fool start fights;
do him a favor and gag him.

Fools are undone by their big mouths;
their souls are crushed by their words.

Think.

- What was happening in the crowd? What is Luke's evaluation of their mental state? Who tried to speak into this situation? What points do you think he might have made? Why did the crowd stop him?
- How strong is the pull of peers on you? How readily can you go against the flow of your peers rather than simply mirroring them? How would you describe a healthy defense against unhealthy peer pressure?

Pray.

Father, let it be your voice that awakens me, draws me, stirs me, moves me. Rescue me from loud slogans and causes. Let me hear and walk with my Shepherd.

Live.

Try "gagging a fool" this week by praying for them with compassion.

5) No cause for all this commotion

Read. Acts 19:38-41 NLT

"If Demetrius and the craftsmen have a case against them, the courts are in session and the officials can hear the case at once. Let them make formal charges. And if there are complaints about other matters, they can be settled in a legal assembly. I am afraid we are in danger of being charged with rioting by the Roman government, since there is no cause for all this commotion. And if Rome demands an explanation, we won't know what to say." Then he dismissed them, and they dispersed.

Read. Proverbs 17:22, 27 Message

A cheerful disposition is good for your health;
gloom and doom leave you bone-tired.

The one who knows much says little;
an understanding person remains calm.

Think.

- What course did the mayor recommend for Demetrius and his companions? What concern did he call attention to? What made this mayor so effective in dispersing the crowd?
- Where do you think our culture sees us as Jesus followers in this story: The overpowering Demetrius? The agitated, ignorant mob? The calm voice of reason amidst confusion? Or what? Why?
- Which of the Proverbs from the past few days has most spoken to you? How do you intend to apply its wisdom to your life?

Pray.

Holy Spirit, let my mouth work in healthy proportion to my heart and head as you live within me. Make me your leaven of peace in the agitated dough of these days.

Live. Conduct a personal disposition check. Ask people close to you if you are a carrier of joy or of doom and gloom.