They’ve turned the world upside down!
They’ve Turned the World Upside Down!

Sermon Notes
January 6, 2013

I. The Messy Birth of the Thessalonian Church
   A. Revivals and Riots
      1. Notice the riots begin as people begin to believe
      2. The war over souls
         • When I get serious about loving others into the kingdom, I can expect difficulty and persecution
         • Satan’s attacks will rarely be head on. He will surprise you!
   B. Religious Jews unite with bad people!
      1. The Jews caused a riot in conjunction with evil people
      2. The innocent were caught in the crossfire
   C. They’ve turned the world upside down!
      1. Perhaps the greatest backhanded compliment ever handed out to a follower of Jesus!
      2. Will I go to my grave having turned my sphere of influence upside down for the sake of Christ?

II. The Noble Minded Bereans
   A. Eager listeners
      1. Open to new things
      2. Not stuck in what God did in the past
   B. Diligent seekers of truth
      1. They knew that the Scriptures were the source of all truth
      2. They did this daily!
      3. Who am I more like, the Thessalonians or the Bereans?
Question One:
• In your own words describe the difference between revival and a riot.

Question Two:
• Why do you think the gospel message of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection is met with such opposition or resistance?

Question Three:
• Describe the different attitudes the people of Berea had in contrast to the Thessalonians.

Question Four:
• Why do you think when we stand up for Jesus we are attacked or persecuted?
Life Group Questions for December 30, 2013

Message = They've turned the World Upside Down!

Ice Breaker: Tell what your favorite Bible verse is and why. If you don’t have a favorite Bible verse, tell what your favorite saying is.


1. What do you observe about this passage.

2. As you read this passage, what do you think was the core issue with the Jews who started the riot? What motives do you think you can see?

3. Why were the Bereans considered more noble minded than the Thessalonians?

4. Luke tells us that the Bereans searched the scriptures DAILY in order to see if what Paul was saying was true. Is digging into the scriptures on a daily basis a priority to you? Why or why not? So, who do you more resemble at this time, the Thessalonians or the Bereans?

5. If you see yourself as being more like the Thessalonians than like the Bereans, what do you think you need to become more like the Bereans?

6. As we have studied the missionary journeys of Paul, what things stand out to you about the initial growth of Christianity in Europe?

7. Pray for one another.

Table Talk

Elementary
Acts 17:1-14

Day 1 - Before we read this week’s passage, I would like to set some context for you and discuss the meaning of the word "revolt." Have you ever heard of this word before? What do you think it means? Look up the word "revolt" on dictionary.com. Now look at the word "revolt" in thesaurus.com. Words such as "rebellion, mutiny, uprising" are all attached to the word "revolt." Do you ever revolt or rebel against your parents, teachers, etc.? (Or have you seen others do this?) What causes one to revolt?

Day 2 - Now let's look at the word "revival." Just as we did with "revolt", look up the word on dictionary.com as well as thesaurus.com. Words such as rebirth, awakening, cheering are all connected to this idea of “revival.” Which would you rather be a part of, a revolution (revolt) or a revival? Why?

Day 3 - Read Acts 17:1-14. What happened when Paul preached the Gospel of Jesus as Savior? (People either revolted or a revival was started). The name of Jesus stirs up a strong reaction in people (in Bible times and today). It's important to know what we, as followers of Christ, believe. We believe that He is the Savior and that He came down to earth to die for our sins. Not all people believe this, and sometimes Christians suffer because of what we believe. Let's pray for a revival (for people to awaken to the truth of Jesus) to take place in our neighborhoods, our schools, our city, and in Northern Colorado and beyond!
Day 1: Read Acts 16:16-38
Start out talking about how Paul liked traveling with his friends to tell others about Jesus. First, he traveled with Barnabas and now he is traveling with Silas. Some men were not happy about what Paul and Silas were doing and they got Paul and Silas hurt and thrown into jail. Ask who was supposed to make sure they did not escape.

Day 2:
Discuss what Paul and Silas did while they were in jail. Ask how it may have made the other prisoners feel. Talk about how, at first, everyone might have been surprised and maybe even annoyed, but that the power of Paul and Silas’ songs and the heartfelt meaning in their worship caused the earth to quake and the jail doors to open and the chains to fall apart. They could have left, but then they would have still been in trouble and so would the jailer. Talk about how amazing it is that this powerful miracle caused the jailer to want to know and believe in Jesus.

Memory Verse:
“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.” - Philippians 4:6

Day 3:
Share with your children some of your favorite worship songs. Talk to them about songs that you like and why. Ask what their favorite song about Jesus is.

Activity:
Make some homemade instruments like tambourines, shakers, and drums. Decorate them and then play them along with your favorite worship music.
Day One

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.

2. Read and meditate on Acts 17:1-14. What stands out to you in this passage?

3. As you read this passage, ask the Holy Spirit to enable you to be a passionate student of His word like the Bereans were.

- Memorize Psalm 119:11
- Memorize Psalm 119:9-11
- Memorize Psalm 119:1-11

Day Five

That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they arrived there, they went to the synagogue. And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message. They searched the Scriptures day after day to check up on Paul and Silas, to see if they were really teaching the truth.

~Acts 17:10, 11

I like how the New Living Translation communicates this story. The Bereans were both open minded and willing to do their due diligence as well. Their world view was shaped by the Old Testament, but their hearts were willing to learn new things.

The tendency for many of us is to set up our tents and camp out when it comes to God. Though He never changes, He is always moving. Though He did something in one way earlier, He will typically do it differently and through different means today. Our tendency is to think that if God did it one way before, He will always do it the same way again.

I remember growing up believing that all good preachers talked just like Billy Graham. The pastors of the day had seen and heard Billy Graham and seen the results of his great crusades. They believed that if they spoke and acted like him, they would have the same results.

We also had a yearly revival. Because over a hundred years before, tent revivals had brought forth explosive church growth, pastors believed that the yearly revival was the way to grow a church. Meanwhile, God had moved on and so had the culture of the U.S.

Father, give me a willingness to hear You and the wisdom to confirm what I hear by searching Your word!
Day Five

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.


3. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you today in any way He would like to speak. Give Him permission to say things that you do not want to hear.

4. Finish your Bible memorization today.

Day One

As was Paul’s custom, he went to the synagogue service, and for three Sabbaths in a row he interpreted the Scriptures to the people. He was explaining and proving the prophecies about the sufferings of the Messiah and his rising from the dead. He said, “This Jesus I’m telling you about is the Messiah.”

~Acts 17:2, 3

It had to be both exciting and alarming to the Jews residing in Greece to hear the news that Paul was preaching. They had, like all other Jews everywhere, expected the Messiah to come for centuries. Like the other Jews, they also expected the Messiah to be a political, military leader rather than the king of a spiritual kingdom.

Now, Paul comes into town with his small entourage announcing that the Messiah has come and that He was crucified as a common criminal, but that He was also raised from the dead.

The Jewish view of the Messiah was such that, if He did come to the earth, everyone would have known about it. Now Paul comes telling everyone that the Messiah came to Israel, and though He made a big splash in that country, He was a little obscure to the international community. That seems to run contrary to everything they thought the Messiah would be. This Jewish King was to be so powerful that He would rescue every Jew from the oppression of Rome. Now, Paul says the Messiah came and went, and Rome is still in charge.

To anyone of a suspicious nature, this news is a bit strange and outlandish. It takes the eyes of faith to see Paul’s news not only as good, but as plausible.

Father, show me how I have created Jesus in my own image. Show me how I’ve expected Him to be one thing, when He is clearly something else.
Day Two

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.

2. Read Acts 17:1-14 again today.


4. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any bitterness or jealousy in your heart. Confess it to Him as sin and allow Him to cleanse you.

5. Continue memorizing and meditating on the scriptures for this week.

Day Four

Not finding them there, they dragged out Jason and some of the other believers instead and took them before the city council. “Paul and Silas have turned the rest of the world upside down, and now they are here disturbing our city,” they shouted.

~Acts 17:6

My prayer is that my enemies will someday say of me, He has turned the world upside down. Though they will think it as slander, I will receive it as a Well done, my good and faithful servant! What greater thing could be said of me that I conveyed the love and truth of Jesus to such a degree that significant change occurred!

The sad truth about the book of Acts is this: the majority of persecution of the church came by the hands of religious people. These were people who believed themselves to be God-fearing, yet viewed what God was doing as evil! Paul and Silas were sent by God to bring the good news of Jesus to Europe, yet the religious Jews, for the most part, rejected them - and rejected God.

That’s why the Bereans were considered to have more noble character because they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. (Acts 17:11) Their noble character was not only due to their pursuit of truth, but because their hearts were open for God to speak to them personally!

What questions do you have of God? Have you pursued Him and His word with an open and honest heart to find the answers you seek? A friend of mine told me that God rewards seekers, not sitters. He rewards those who go after Him and after His truth.

Father, with an honest and humble heart, I look for You in the words of the Bible today!
Day Two

And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women.

~Acts 17:4

Translate that as: a few Jews believed, but more God-fearing Greeks believed, along with a large number of influential Greek women. These Greek men and women are members of the Jewish synagogue who believe in the God of the Bible.

History tells us what an interesting group this was. Most Greeks followed the religion of their culture - the worship of the gods of Olympus. At the same time, there were Jews living all over Europe, but they were not well liked. They had strange laws that caused them to be very finicky about what they ate. They refused to work on Saturdays, and they insisted on worshiping one God who was invisible - He had no statues in His likeness. The Greeks mentioned here have found something attractive in this God of the Jews.

I call this humility. It is a deep hunger for truth and transformation that can only be stirred by the Divine. It’s a willingness to go outside of a dominant culture and looking into the faith of a minority culture. It’s also driven by a desire to read. As these Gentiles read the Holy Scriptures, they found a God who was gracious, compassionate, omnipotent, wise, and incredibly loving. In contrast, the gods of the Greeks were more petty, childish, and lascivious than mere mortals!

When Paul explained the life, love, wisdom, and transcendence of Jesus of Nazareth, something stirred them deep within.

Father, give me the grace to strive after You whole heartedly. I humble myself to search for You with my whole being.

Day Four

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.

2. Read Acts 17: 1-14 again today. Write down what the Holy Spirit says to you through this passage today.

3. Write down some questions you have for God. Ask Him how to start searching His word to find the answers.

4. Continue meditating on and memorizing the scripture for this week.
Day Three

1. Take some time to praise the Lord for who He is and enjoy thanking Him for what He has done in your life lately.


3. Bring at least three friends or loved ones to the Lord and ask Him to bring them to repentance and faith. Ask Him to show you how you can boldly love them and speak the words of Jesus into their lives.

4. Continue meditating on and memorizing the scripture for this week.

But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.

~Acts 17:5

Behold how the racial issues come to life. When the God-fearing Gentiles who attend your synagogue begin to follow the new evangelist in great numbers, you find yourself jealous, angry, and fearful.

Luke implies that this jealousy has racial undertones. One way to know that your motives for starting a riot are probably evil by nature is to look at your compatriots. Luke tells us that they took along some wicked men from the market place and formed a mob.

Hmm. When I’m willing to team up with bad guys to get what I want... I probably want something evil myself. My partners always define me and define my desires. I can lie to myself and defend my motives, but when I team up with evil to accomplish good, my definition of good has been fudged a bit.

The second confirmation that I’ve probably lied to myself about my motives is when I attack the innocent. The Jews and their mob attacked the house of Jason, a man who simply showed hospitality to Paul and Silas. Innocent people are the greatest victims of the arrogant who do not take time to allow God to search their hearts.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way.

~Psalms 139:23, 24