

Lesson 25 – Acts 19:21-41

An Angry Mob

Take a moment and think of a few words that might describe life in your community and nation if there were no laws. Chaos, disorder, violence, confusion, and many other words may enter your mind. Laws restrain behavior in a society and establish consequences when they are broken. Without laws, people would do whatever they felt like doing. Anarchy would follow, and society as we know it would collapse.

The Romans saw the importance of laws. In this lesson, we will see how God used Roman laws to once again protect Paul and his companions.

The Love of Money

Silversmiths in Ephesus were upset that Paul's teachings were putting their profits at risk. They earned their income making silver shrines of the goddess Artemis, and people who heard the Gospel were no longer buying them.

The love of money sometimes gets in the way of people believing the good news of the Gospel. In I Timothy 6:9-11, Paul writes to the young pastor Timothy and warns against the temptation of becoming obsessed with getting rich and falling away from the faith. Paul tells us to flee from an obsessive pursuit of money and to instead pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance, and gentleness.

Hebrews 13:5 reminds us to be free from the love of money. What promise has God made that allows us to be content with what we have, no matter how little or how much?

- *God has promised that he will never desert us or forsake us, so we can be confident that whether we have a lot or a little, God keeps us safe.*

Into the Word: Acts 19:21-41

The city of Ephesus was home to one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The massive Temple of Artemis was dedicated to the Roman goddess of the hunt and drew crowds of worshipers from around the Roman world.

We read in verses 21-22 that Paul was planning his future travels from Ephesus when a great disturbance arose in the city concerning what Paul and the new Christians were doing.

Complete the statements in the story that follows:

1. The first characters in this story are the silver tradesmen. Their spokesman was named *Demetrius* (v.24). These men were defending their incomes and the goddess Artemis, whom they worshiped. A disturbance occurred because as people in Ephesus heard Paul teach the Gospel, they (v.26) *were turning away from worshiping idols and not buying the silver shrines made by Demetrius and his silver tradesmen.*

Naturally, the tradesmen were afraid their businesses would fail. They also were concerned that the Temple of Artemis might lose its worth as people would stop worshipping the goddess.

2. In verse 29, two more characters are introduced: the friends of Paul, *Gaius* and *Aristarchus*. Following the lead of the angry tradesmen, the crowd rushed into the amphitheater. Chaos and confusion erupted into a riot, and the mob dragged the two friends of Paul with them.
3. Paul wanted to go help his two friends, but other friends protected him from the angry mob and (vv.30-31) *would not let him enter the theater.*
4. The theater in Ephesus could hold 25,000 people. Describe what was strange about this gathering (v.32). *Amazingly many in the crowd had no idea why they were there.*

Note verse 33. In the midst of the confusion, a man named Alexander motioned for silence. The crowd recognized that he was a Jew and was not a worshiper of Artemis. They began shouting for the next two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

5. The last character of this story is introduced in verse 35. He is the *town clerk*, a leader in the city. Somehow he managed to calm the crowd and reasoned with them to not do anything foolish. He reminded the people that Gaius and Aristarchus were neither *robbers of temples nor blasphemers of the goddess*. In other words, these men had done nothing wrong (vv.36-37).

The town clerk told the crowd they must make a legitimate complaint and take it to court, according to the laws of the city (v.38). He warned them that they could be accused of (vv.39-40) *inciting a riot* since they had gathered without any real cause or complaint. The clerk then dismissed the assembly.

New Ideas: Civil Obedience

The people of Ephesus nearly started a riot because of Paul's teachings. Can riots ever serve a good purpose? One might argue that in some extreme cases of total government failure or other such breakdown of civil order, a riot might be acceptable. However, any potential benefit a riot might bring about doesn't justify the chaos, damage, and injury done. There are better ways to deal with social injustice or other societal problems effectively than the uncontrolled damage done by an unruly mob.

What does God's Word teach that can be applied to the question of riots?

- I Corinthians 14:40 *All things should be done properly, in an orderly manner.*
- Romans 12:18 *As far as it depends on us, we are called to live at peace with all men.*
- Romans 13:1 *Since God is the authority, and earthly governments are established by Him, we are to live in obedience to the governing authorities.*

Memory Verse

Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise,
making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

Ephesians 5:15-16

Extra Memory Challenge

Romans 12:18

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Discussion Questions

Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.

1. Acts 19:32 tells about a mob of people who were filled with rage and ready to riot, even though they did not know what they were upset about. Can you give an example of a situation where a group of people have reacted in a similar way? Talk about why it is important to think through all the facts before getting swept along with a crowd.

Answers will vary but situations like school shooting responses, riots related to police responses to crimes involving race issues, school issues locally that cause students to protest by walk outs etc. are possible examples. Things to consider: what are the outcomes the group desires, sometimes these are not defined, are you in agreement with the outcomes, are you in agreement or here to support a friend,

could your actions involve you in legal trouble, if you are involved in sports or other things in school how will this affect your participation in those activities, could your life be endangered, will your participation hinder your Christian witness to others, will others follow you and they could be injured or hurt just because they followed you

2. The people of Ephesus had built their whole identity around the false goddess Artemis, who wasn't even real. There was nothing more important to them than protecting her reputation and her importance to the town. Consider the First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." It's easy to allow things to displace our fear, love, and trust in God. Things like sports teams, TV shows, or gaming are only a few of the pastimes that can displace the really important things: faith in Christ, family and friends, and living a godly life. What can each of us do in our own lives to keep a biblical perspective in all our activities?

Consider how much time you spend in each activity you are involved in, ie how many hours do you spend playing video games, what are the topics of conversation with your friends (would anyone know you are a Christian by listening to your conversation) who are you choosing for your friends, is your devotional time consistent, sporadic or nonexistent, how much time do you spend with your church family, your own family, your Christian friends

Seek God in prayer and in the counsel of your parents, youth leaders to help you make wise decisions about all the activities you are involved in, who you choose to spend your time with, seek to make time for your personal devotions, church attendance as priorities, reevaluate these things often, especially as you consider adding one more thing to your schedule, you only have 24 hours in a day, what will be neglected if you add this activity

Daily Devotions

Sunday:	Isaiah 44:13-20
Monday:	Psalms 115:1-9
Tuesday:	Jeremiah 10:1-7
Wednesday:	Jeremiah 10:8-16
Thursday:	I Chronicles 16:8-14
Friday:	I Chronicles 16:15-27
Saturday:	Psalms 96:1-13

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND ITS CHURCH YEAR

* What is Worship?

The word "worship" comes from the old English word "worthship," so it reminds us of how worthy God is of our adoration. Worship is a mutual interaction where God comes to us in His Word and Sacrament, and we respond to God through confession, prayer, and praise. Believers are encouraged to engage in personal worship every day. In the local congregation, the word "worship" is used to identify the formal times of gathering for the hearing of the Word, the singing of praises, the partaking of the Sacraments, and prayer. God directs believers to not neglect gathering together for worship.

1. What does Psalm 95:1-7 teach us about how the Old Testament people of God worshiped? How does Colossians 3:15-17 describe New Testament worship?

Old Testament worshipers came together and used music to sing praises to God for His mighty deeds and they humbled themselves under His loving care. New Testament worshipers responded to the teaching of the word of Christ by confessing our sins, praising God in song, thanking Him, and serving others.

2. How important is gathering together for worship according to Hebrews 10:19-25?

Worship encourages us to approach God in faith to be assured of our forgiveness, to encourage us to stand firm in our hope, and to stimulate one another to serve the Lord. So it's very important for us to keep on gathering for worship, especially as the Last Day gets closer.