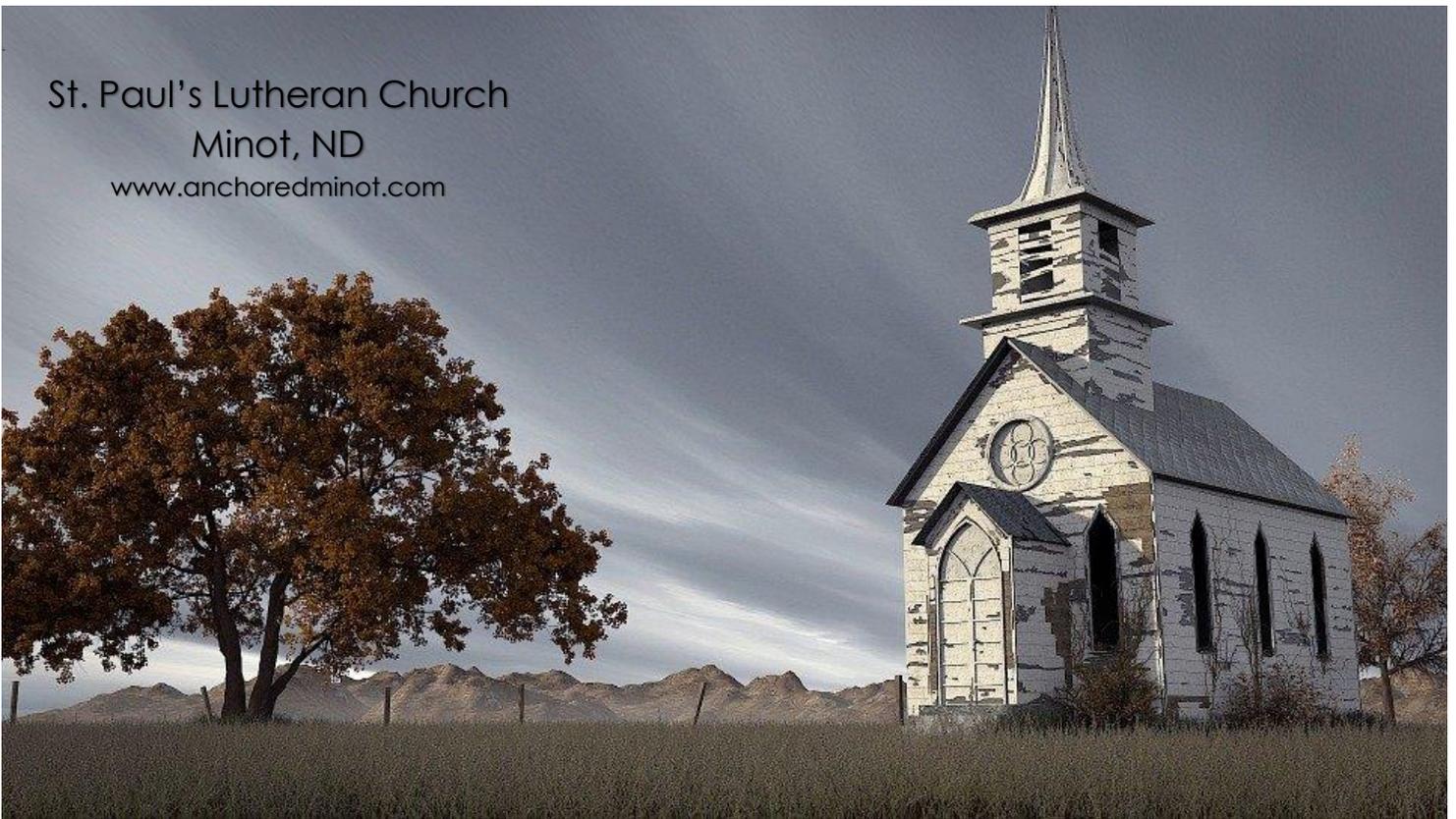


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# The Acts of the Apostles

The Ministry of the Gospel in a Messy Church & Conflicting World     Acts 19:21-41

It is important to keep in mind that Christianity is not inclusionary but exclusionary. In other words, it is important to keep in mind that Jesus claims that he is not 'a' truth and 'a' way but 'the' truth and 'the' way. The Christian faith does not see itself as one option among many other religious options, but instead, it sees itself as the "One True Faith," with a bunch of cults and false demonic religions around it.

And so, the result of Christianity's exclusionary aspect is that once a person converts to Christianity, he/she drops their ties to their previous religious superstitions. Unlike many ideologies of the world, Christianity does not allow itself to blend with Islam, Hinduism, or other false religions. It cannot syncretize, blend, or unite with other false religions. One cannot do a smorgasbord religion, using Christianity as one option among many.

While Christianity's exclusionary zeal may be difficult to swallow for some people, the effects – or fruit – of this exclusionary-ness creates dramatic ripples in culture. The consequence or result of

Christianity's exclusionary theology stretches far and wide into people's pocketbooks, habits, and worldviews. Take Acts 19:21-41 as an example.

In Acts 19, we are introduced to a silversmith named Demetrius. He opposed Christianity because when Paul evangelized, the message of Christianity exposed that the goddess Artemis was fake. But why would that matter to Demetrius? Simply stated, Demetrius made silver souvenirs – little models or temple boxes made of silver. (*There is reason to believe that Demetrius may have been a civil magistrate and a possible employer of multiple silversmiths.*) Furthermore, keep in mind that in Ephesus, there was a temple for the goddess Artemis. The temple was one of the 7 Wonders of the ancient world that attracted thousands of people to Ephesus. To the point, though. As Christianity grew and spread, it consequently eroded the false gods of the Roman Empire. If there is only One God, then Artemis was a false goddess – a fake. And if Artemis was a fake, then her temple was a fake. And if her temple was nothing, then people would perhaps stop coming to Ephesus for

tourism and stop buying souvenirs. And if tourism slowed down and the buying of souvenirs declined, then Demetrius' business would fail, and profits would stop leaving everyone broke and their livelihoods shattered.

And so, it is important to understand the false goddess Artemis not only brought in tourism dollars to Ephesus but also brought in souvenir dollars. Furthermore, this false goddess also had multiple festivals attached to her. Yes, the culture, habits, and customs of Ephesus were influenced by Artemis too. And so, Christianity's exclusionary aspect not only attacked the false goddess Artemis, but it also threatened Ephesus' tourism, economy, culture, habits, and customs.

Now it makes sense why Demetrius and the people became so enraged in verse 19:28 (*i.e., fierce wrath with heavy breathing*). But what about the riot and confusion? Frankly stated, many of the people in Ephesus developed a mob and riot mentality.

There are stages to riots, as clearly seen in Acts 19. First, with every mob and/or riot, there is always the one who stirs. There is always a mastermind – a wizard behind the screen. In the case of Acts 19, the one who is stirring is Demetrius. Secondly, the mastermind stirs the group of people into a rage. (*Keep in mind that the mastermind stirs a group to rage because they have no solid comeback or solid argument towards their predicament. Rage becomes a tool of revenge or a leveraging tool to get what they want.*) Once enraged, the rage will spread like wildfire. Angry people will stir up other people, resulting in each person losing their individual consciousness and being pulled along in the dynamics of the larger group's anger. (*See 19:28*) Thirdly, once angry, the group will be driven to action such as yelling, demonstrating, destroying property, beating people, etc. (*See 19:29-32*). Fourthly, because individuals lose self-consciousness in a larger group and are driven by the rage of the mob (*which is being stirred and directed by the mastermind*), there will be much confusion. They often won't understand the exact reasons and/or details why they are upset or angry. (*see 19:32*) And so, fifthly, good order will only be restored either when the mob/riot fizzles out of energy or when the mastermind quits his stirring. But why/how would a mastermind quit stirring? Well, quite simply, the mastermind quits stirring when the curtain is pulled back, and they are called out. Take note of Acts 19:35-ff, where a very powerful Town Clerk called out Demetrius and the artisans.

