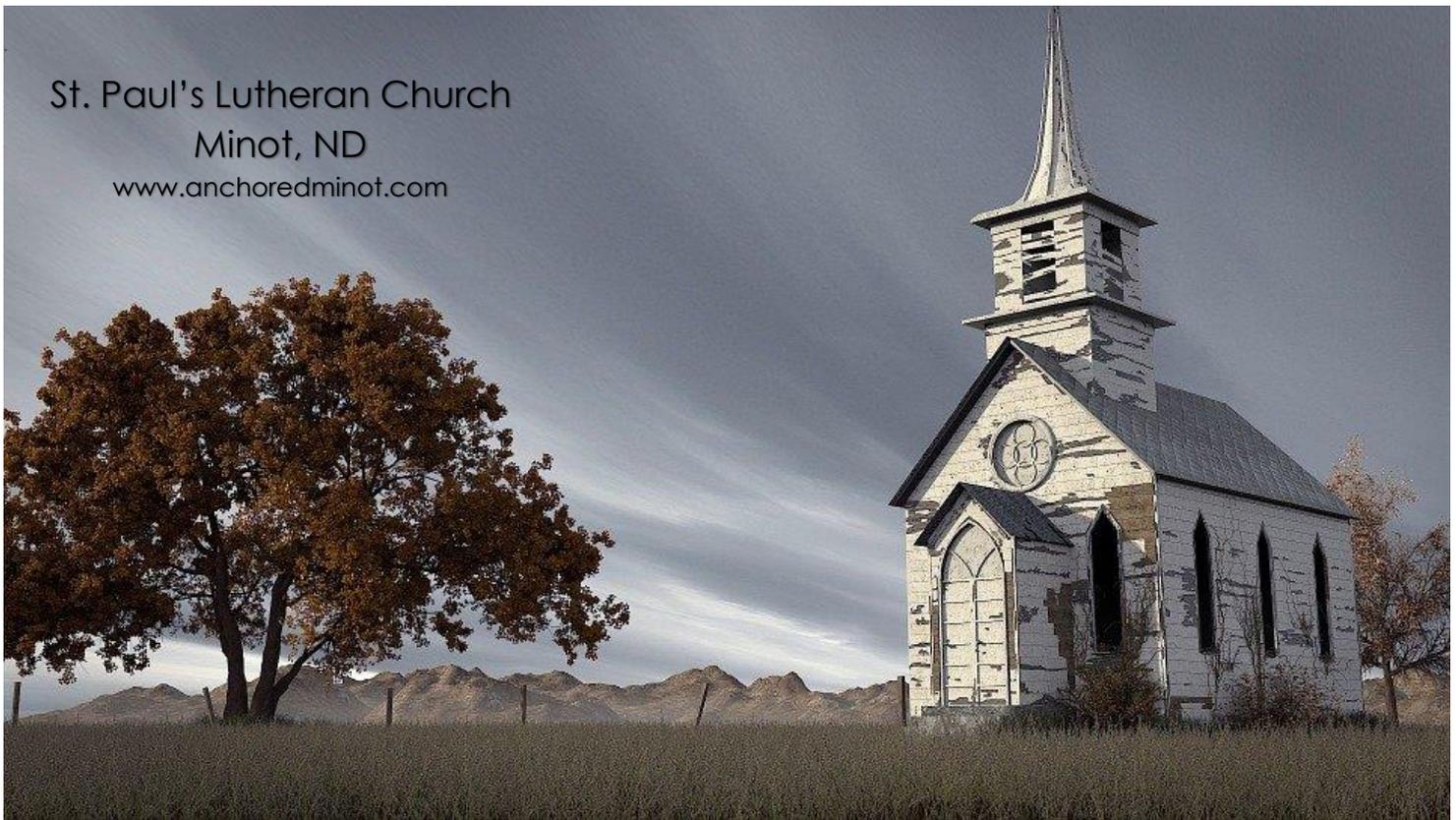


St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
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# The Acts of the Apostles

The Ministry of the Gospel in a Messy Church & Conflictive World

Acts 21:37-22:30

After almost being killed by an angry mob, Paul is taken to the barracks (i.e., a place where soldiers slept – a military compound). But before going into the barracks, Paul asked the commander if he could address the angry mob. And so, after this, there was a great hush and Paul – ‘confessed.’

Keep in mind that Paul had spoken to many audiences and crowds. But many were not like this angry mob. This mob viewed Paul as a renegade Jew who had deserted the Jewish faith and the teachings of his mentor – Gamaliel. Furthermore, Paul was viewed as one who treated Gentiles as if they were equals with the Jews. Nonetheless, Paul spoke to the angry mob.

Very brief, what did Paul say? First, he gave his biography – his resume – in verses 21:3-5. Second, Paul gave the story of his conversion (21:6-16). Thirdly, Paul shared a little about what happened after his conversion (21:17-21). However, this is as far as Paul got in addressing the angry mob.

So what happened to the angry mob? Simply stated, they lost their marbles. As one commentator stated, “[The mob] began one of the most odious and despicable spectacles which the world can witness, they spectacle of ... a hideous ... impotent rage, howling, yelling, cursing, gnashing their teeth, flinging about their arms, waving and tossing their blue and red robes, casting dust into the air by handfuls, with all the furious gesticulations of an uncontrolled fanaticism.”

In our modern world, we call this incident “being triggered.” That is to say; they had a mental breakdown. But why? It is important to keep in mind that everyone in this world constructs narratives or worldviews for themselves. They create a vision of the world to make sense of it. They create a narrative – a story – on how the world works. The worldviews and narratives convey meaning to individuals – who are the bad guys in life, who are the good guys in life, what do we value, what do we hate, what is the meaning of life, how do I function in this world, etc. Many of these worldviews and narratives go unnoticed to a person -

it is the way things are for them. That is to say, many of these worldviews and narratives happen subconsciously, which means that they are a part of our everyday life but not something that we consciously think about or ponder. However, when our worldviews and narratives are challenged? Well, we get very – yes, very – agitated. We oftentimes are willing to shed blood to preserve and keep our worldviews and narratives. And when we are ‘really’ challenged by data and information that could potentially dismantle our narrative and worldview, well... we are triggered. We will lose our marbles. And that is when we are ‘really’ dangerous. As a sociologist once stated on this subject [paraphrasing], *“We get meaning from our worldviews, and so a loss of meaning will result in a loss of ourselves. This can be incredibly traumatic, which is the reason why we will fight – and even die – to keep such meaning alive.”*

Do we Christians have a worldview and a narrative, though? You bet we do! And we are not afraid to admit it and talk about it. But what are our worldview and narrative? Well, contrary to what you might think, it is not the Bible. You see, the Bible is not our worldview but the ‘source’ of our worldview. That is to say; the Bible is that which shapes our worldviews. The Bible creates the narrative in how we understand who the bad guys are, who the good guys are, what we value, what we hate, the meaning of life, how we function in this world, etc. More specifically, our worldview and narrative are clearly stated and outlined in the Book of Concord and the Small Catechism. And so, we Lutherans do not hide our worldview/narrative. We proudly publish it for others to see.

But what about freaking out when we are challenged? Consider the following thought: as Christians, we are not the way, the truth, and the life. Therefore when truth is attacked, we know that people are attacking Christ and His Word, not us. And since Christ has already endured the world’s scorn and is now raised from the dead, we are neither easily triggered nor defensive when challenged. On the other hand, we can weep for those who have located their perception of truth within their ideological worldviews/narratives. Indeed, we can weep for them because they have become a compass unto themselves in the midst of the raging sea of life.

