

Turning the World Upside Down – Question One  
Acts 17:1-6  
June 25, 2017

*Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also."*

Last week we talked about the shake up Paul and Silas brought to Thessalonica. Paul and Silas had traveled through parts of modern day Turkey and Greece. Everywhere they went they spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. By the time they arrived at Thessalonica, they had earned quite a reputation. So, the people of Thessalonica knew exactly what their arrival meant.

Some of the Thessalonians were trying to get Paul and Silas in trouble. The text tells us they claimed Paul and Silas were causing trouble all over the world. They accused Paul and Silas of turning the world upside down. In their efforts to convince the city officials how dangerous Paul and Silas were, they paid them a great compliment.

Paul and Silas were turning the world upside down. They were telling the world the truth about Jesus. Their message was messing up people. It was shocking news to the people to hear there was a God who loved them. A God who was different from their gods because he was a God of grace and mercy.

The message of Jesus Christ was a true game changer. People were not the same. To make matters worse, there was no middle ground. The people had to believe or not. This put the people in two opposing camps, and that was turning the world upside down.

Last week, we also talked a little bit about how we could turn the world upside down. We asked what if people thought we were like Paul and Silas? What if we were so effective living for Jesus we really made a difference? What if we were the kind of Christians who turned Farmington Hills upside down?

We started to look at that possibility, but we didn't go deep enough. So today we're going to begin an in-depth look at shaking up our world. Last week I asked four questions, and those four questions will be the focal point for today and the next three weeks.

Question 1: Are we a threat when it comes to turning the world upside down? Do we have what it takes to make a difference in this world? Is Jesus important enough to us that we will stop and nothing to see him lifted up and his name praised?

Question 2: Are the people of Farmington Hills talking about the impact we are having on the community? Does our community see any change we are bringing? Is Farmington Hills different because we exist?

Question 3: Are we doing anything that will disturb our community? Are we shaking up those around us who have no use for Jesus or God's Word? Are we doing anything that causes people to be disturbed by our presence?

Question 4: Is our presence leading people to see the truth of God's Word? Are our words and actions doing anything to help people acknowledge Jesus as their Lord and Savior?

Today we will deal with the first question: Are we a threat to turn the world upside down?

What does it mean to be a threat to turning the world upside down? A threat is someone who is considered dangerous. Turning the world upside down literally means to flip everything over. It means bringing an end to the way things have always been.

What would we look like if we were that threat? We would be considered a dangerous threat to bringing radical change. We would be changing the way people think about church. We would be a church people would either love or hate. There would be no middle ground. Every time one of us showed up somewhere there would be the threat of change happening.

We would be like Jesus because everywhere Jesus went he brought change. He was considered dangerous because he was changing the way the people thought about worship. He was challenging the status of the church leaders by exposing their hypocrisy. He was even changing the relationship between the Jews and the Romans.

We would be as dangerous as the Apostles after they had received the power of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles changed the lives of thousands of people. The Jewish leaders told them to stop, but they didn't. Their preaching shook Jerusalem to its foundations.

We would be like Paul who became dangerous after he met Jesus. The Jewish leaders tried to kill Paul because of his message. He was run out of one city after another and some of those places also tried to kill him. Paul was even hunted by the leaders of false religions because he was bringing change.

Why did all these people feel so threatened? They felt threatened for the same reason people feel threatened today. People fear a radical departure from what they feel is normal. Jesus, the Apostles, and Paul were preaching a message that was radically

different from what the people had ever heard. For us to be that kind of a threat, we have to show the people something radically different from what they see in the everyday world, and from what they see in many churches.

When you begin to rock the boat, you become a threat to the status quo. You bring something into people's lives they have never experienced. When you spread the Gospel message, things can never be the way they have always been.

Change is dangerous. Change causes people to think differently. Change says what has always been, and what is now, may not be all there is. Change upsets the status quo.

The threat Jesus, the Apostles, and Paul brought was a good change. They weren't out to hurt people. Their goal was to save people. The change they brought offered the people an opportunity to see the one true God. It was the reaction of the people who felt threatened that was bad.

When we speak about being a threat like Jesus, we are not speaking about a malicious change. We are speaking about a threat to the things that lead people astray into eternal damnation. We are speaking about being a change that will lead people to the changing power of God.

How can we be a threat without being a menace? How can we be lovingly dangerous people? To do this, there is no better example to follow than the example of Jesus.

Jesus treated nobodies like somebodies. He cared about people no one else cared about. He cared about the sick, the marginalized, those people on the fringe of society. The key word here is care. If you want to turn the world upside down, you have to truly care about people. You have to love the people no one else wants to love. You have to share the love of Jesus with the people no one else wants to touch.

Jesus challenged the religious establishment. He flipped the religion of the day on its head. He pointed out what religion really is; a set of rules and regulations made by a few people that everyone was supposed to follow.

The key word here is challenge. I'm not talking about going after other churches. There are many churches out there doing everything they can for Jesus. I'm talking about challenging what people believe church to be. I'm talking about challenging what people think it means to be following Jesus.

We need to challenge the social club image that is so prevalent among unchurched people. That means challenging the "we are better than you" mentality. Challenging the idea that keeping all the rules, being in church every Sunday, giving enough money, doing enough good works makes you okay and gets you into heaven. Challenging the "secret society" myth that many people believe about church.

I'm talking about telling people and proving to people that Jesus will accept everybody and anybody who turns to him. Telling people that Jesus will accept them the same way he accept you and me - by faith alone.

Jesus was totally radical about seeing people's lives changed. Nothing, not even death, could stop Jesus from going all the way to show people his love and the love of his Father. Jesus came to set free those who were held in the bondage of sin and death, and he succeeded. He did it when he was here on earth and he continues to do that today.

Jesus reaches the lost today through the witness, both word and deeds, of his committed followers; through the witness of his disciples. Jesus didn't accept halfhearted commitment when he was here on earth and he doesn't accept halfhearted commitment today. There is no place for fence-sitters with Jesus. He said: *He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.* (Mt 12:30 NIV).

If Prince of Peace Lutheran Church is going to turn the world upside down, we must be committed. We must decide to do whatever it takes, whatever the price might be, to bring Jesus to Farmington Hills. We must resign ourselves to accept whatever ridicule or persecution comes our way.

We must, as the body of Christ, remain fully committed to the marching orders our Savior gave: *Go and make disciples of all nations* (Mt 28:19).