

Turning the World Upside Down – Question 4  
Acts 17:1-8  
July 16, 2017

There is a very old and very familiar phrase that many of us often heard when we were children. In an instant, this simple phrase would change the entire day for us. It could strike fear in the bravest of us. When this phrase was said, everything and everyone stopped in their tracks. Things would be going along business as usual and then Mother would invoke the phrase. Do you have it yet? “Wait till your father gets home.”

Just the thought of the fallout Dad’s appearance would bring could chill your blood. Just the threat of Dad’s reaction to your behavior was huge, because when Dad got home things would be different. Dad’s presence could change your attitude. It could change your actions. When Dad showed up, things changed.

What if that happened when we showed up? Not the possibility of punishment, but the possibility of changed lives. What if our presence pointed people to Jesus. Suzanne and I sometimes go to a little Irish tavern that’s close to our house. We don’t go to have a drink as much as we go to interact with the people. The usual patrons know I’m a pastor and just our presence changes things. The people are interested in hearing about our lives as Christians.

This is the last Sunday in this sermon series. For the past four weeks, we have been considering Acts 17:6. *These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.*

We talked about the events leading up to this verse. Paul and Silas had shown up in Thessalonica. Just like the other cities they had visited, Thessalonica began to shake. As Paul and Silas told the message of Jesus, “normal” in Thessalonica began to unravel.

Here’s how Scripture tells the story: *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, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things.*

Our primary focus has been on verse 6: *These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.* This is what those who opposed Paul and Silas were saying about

them. It was meant to be an accusation, but to our ears it sounds like a compliment: *These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also.*

These people had good reason to think Paul and Silas were going to turn Thessalonica upside down. After all, their reputation for turning things upside down reached town before they did.

Our real focus in this series has been “What if people thought that we were going to turn Farmington Hills upside down?” What if the people in this area knew we belong to Prince of Peace and, because of us, things were about to change?

What if people were turning to Jesus because of our words and actions? What if we had a reputation for turning the world upside down? What if our community was radically changed because we are here?

Let’s review the ground we’ve covered thus far.

Question 1 – Are we a threat to turning our world upside down? Do we have what it takes to make a difference in our world? Is Jesus so important to us that nothing will stop us from seeing his name lifted up and praised?

To address these questions, we talked about a three-fold plan: 1) treat nobodies as somebodies; 2) Challenge what people think the church is all about; 3) Be completely devoted to seeing people’s lives changed.

Question 2 – Are the people of Farmington Hills and the surrounding area talking about our impact? Does our community see any change we are bringing? Is this city different because we and this church exist?

To address these questions, we talk about two actions that will lead us to making an impact. 1) We need to sincerely love our community and the people in it. 2) To achieve that love, we need to find out what God is doing in and around Prince of Peace.

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

To make a good disturbance in our community we looked at three actions: 1) We stand for Jesus; 2) We stand united for Jesus; 3) We stand for Jesus and only Jesus.

Today we look at question 4. This is the “bottom line” question not only for Prince of Peace, but for all Christians and all Christian churches. Is our presence pointing people to Jesus? Are we saying and doing things that make people see Jesus as their Savior and King?

Let's look at how the presence of Paul and Silas brought change: **Acts 17:2-4** *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.*

Paul and Silas took advantage of every opportunity to do what they were called to do: *Go and make disciples*. Whenever there were people around, they used their time wisely. They explained who Jesus is. Some people listened. Others didn't, but that didn't stop Paul and Silas from always looking for a chance to talk about Jesus.

Because this was their method of operation, there was always the chance someone would listen and the Holy Spirit would touch that person's heart. Paul and Silas made sure their presence would mean things would never be the same. They made sure people heard about Jesus. They made sure the Holy Spirit would be there to do his work. Paul and Silas couldn't make people believe in Jesus, but they were faithful in speaking the Gospel.

I'm sure people noticed there was something different about Paul and Silas. They probably walked with an air of confidence. They undoubtedly showed patience, peace, and inner joy because of their faith. However, no one would know why they were different until they opened their mouths and spoke.

The same was true about Jesus. People could look at Jesus and tell he was different. They might have experienced his patience, witnessed his peace, and marveled at his inner joy. However, no one would know why Jesus was different until he told them.

Romans 10:17 says: *faith comes from hearing*. If people are going to know about Jesus, someone has to verbally tell them. If our presence is going to help people see Jesus for whom is truly is, we need to speak the truth in love.

Telling people about Jesus seems to be one of the most difficult things to do. We can talk about the weather. We can talk about sports. We can tell people about a good bargain at the local market. We can sit on a bench in the mall and talk with a complete stranger about how unruly kids are these days. But try to talk to these same people about Jesus and suddenly we lose our voice.

Since our most important job in life is to tell others about Jesus, let me give you some simple steps on how to talk about Jesus.

- 1) Some of us were baptized as babies, others later in life. However, no matter when you were baptized, there has to be some part of your life when you and Jesus weren't as close as you should have been. These aren't usually someone's most sterling moments. Start by telling another person what your life was like when you were separated from Jesus. You don't have to give every detail of your life, but tell enough to show you weren't much different from them.

2) Tell about how you came to know Jesus or what brought you back to Jesus. Was it a life event; a death, a birth, a wedding. Maybe it was a time spent with substance abuse or a stint in jail. Maybe it was a friend, a church service, a song.

3) Talk about what you did because of your life-changing event. Did you pick up God's Word and read it? Did you pray? Did you talk about it with a Christian friend? Tell about how you turned from your old life to Jesus.

4) Then talk about how different your life is now that you're in a proper relationship with your Savior. Talk about the things in life that are no longer important to you. Tell about some struggles you still experience. But most of all, talk about how your faith in trust in Jesus are daily making you more like Jesus.

Wherever Paul and Silas showed up they were prepared to talk about Jesus. Their presence made a difference because they were prepared to make a difference. If you want your presence to make a difference, you have to be prepared to make a difference.

Your preparation should include regular weekly worship, serious Bible study, constant prayer, dedicated service to both God's church and all those around you, and a fervent desire to reach people with the life-changing message of salvation through faith alone, grace alone, and Scripture alone.