

Call to Worship: Colossians 3:16

Scripture Reading: Judges 17:1-6

Sermon: "Grace, and the Need for It, On Display in Ephesus" Acts 19:21-20:1

Benediction: 1 Peter 2:17

I. See in this story the low, dark state of the human being in his sin, the need the sinner has for the grace of God

A. Adam and Eve were created as beautiful, exalted creatures

-they were to make their living by taking the good things God had created and tending them, ordering them, to be the most enjoyable and useful for mankind, to God's glory

-they worshipped God largely by fellowshiping with Him directly, as He walked with them in the garden

B. But when they sinned, and we sinned in them, they plunged us into a state of severe corruption; our flesh became a curse to us, filled with sinful desires; we came to be sinners by nature and by our own actions; we became capable of the most heinous crimes against God and against our fellow men

C. We here, in this place and time, often lose sight of the true condition of the sinner, because we have some very strong restraints placed on us, to keep us from acting as wicked as we would were we more free to act according to our sinful nature

1. we have the power of God-given government, the threat that if we do something evil against our fellow man, we might be locked up in prison or executed

2. we have the influence of good families, parents and older brothers and sisters teaching us what's right and pressuring us to conform

3. we have the influence of a relatively moral society, although that is changing

4. we have the threatenings of the law of God, the vague fear that to break His commandments too badly would mean some kind of punishment

D. But in the Bible we have numerous examples to instruct us and remind us just how sinful we human beings really are; here are some in this account

1. Demetrius

-makes his living sculpting idols; uses his God-given talent to fashion shrines (24)

-rejects the most rudimentary, fundamental religious truth (26)

-feigns religious devotion to manipulate people (27)

2. The other craftsmen

a. easily swayed by a persuasive speaker

b. quick to severe anger

3. The mob of citizens

-rushed to join a mob as soon as they saw it forming

-instead of listening to a reasoned response, shouted out a mindless religious slogan for hours

II. See the common grace God bestows on all mankind in ordaining human governments

- "common grace" is a term we use for

- he makes it rain on the just and the unjust
- he refrains from destroying the world by flood
- he grants the blessings of marriage and children
- he causes the earth to grow food
- in this case we see how He defends man's rights by human governments

A. recall what human society in all its sinfulness had become in the time of Noah

*Genesis 6:11-13 The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was **filled with violence**. (12) So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. (13) And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for **the earth is filled with violence through them**; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.*

B. God, in grace common to all mankind, instituted human government, ordering that the use of deadly force be delegated to some, so that they could protect people's rights, especially that they would greatly reduce violence among men by executing wrath on evildoers; so now, enjoying that wonderful common grace of God, people all over the world live in relative peace and safety by the use of the institution of government

C. Here, in this story from Ephesus, we see what a blessing that common grace from God is on the people of that city

1. some wicked men try to violate the rights of others, specifically the Christian missionaries

2. here is a officer from the executive branch of the government decrying such lawlessness and recommending the right use of the two other branches of the government

- a. the judicial branch: if there is some private matter between Demetrius and the preachers of The Way, let him make use of the courts

- b. the legislative branch: if there is some public matter that requires new laws to be passed, let that be done in a lawful assembly

3. it is a very special gift of God for sinners to have a stable government in place, with all three branches operating correctly

D. APPLICATION: Let us remember to be thankful to God for His common grace, that favor we enjoy along with all mankind

E. APPLICATION: Let us keep in our minds the importance of the grace of good government; let us pray for those who have the government; let us give them all due respect and pay them all the taxes that we owe; let us do whatever our part is to protect, maintain, establish, or restore this kind of good government in our time

III. See the grace God bestows on His people in love

A. See the diligence God graciously works in Paul (21)

1. where I really want to go is Rome
2. but there is another work that must be done---the poor in Jerusalem must be relieved, and the gentile churches in Europe must learn to do it
3. also, those churches in Europe must be strengthened
4. so, he is planning a tour through Macedonia and Greece
5. APPLICATION

B. See the willingness to serve that God graciously worked in Timothy's and Erastus (22)

1. APPLICATION

C. See the message of repentance God graciously sent to the pagans (26)

1. they were in pagan darkness
2. Paul preached to that idols are nothing, and that there is one true, living God; that He has ordained the man who will judge idolators, the man Jesus Christ; who has died for sinners and risen again to life, and that for now there is still time for even pagans to repent of their idolatry, trusting in Jesus Christ to save them
3. and by God's grace, so many had been persuaded that it was hurting the idol business!
4. APPLICATION

D. See the self sacrifice God graciously worked in Gaius and Aristarchus (29)

- APPLICATION

E. See the love for each other God graciously works in the church (20:1)

- APPLICATION

note that being free from authority, being autonomos, sounds nice, but is not desireable in this sinful state of being