



United Methodist Church OF GENEVA

Expect Resistance

A sermon in the Spirited Adventure Series by Pastor Rob Hamilton
Delivered on July 29, 2022 on Acts 19:23-41NRSV

23 About that time no little disturbance broke out concerning the Way. 24 A man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the artisans. 25 These he gathered together, with the workers of the same trade, and said, “Men, you know that we get our wealth from this business. 26 You also see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost the whole of Asia this Paul has persuaded and drawn away a considerable number of people by saying that gods made with hands are not gods. 27 And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be scorned, and she will be deprived of her majesty that brought all Asia and the world to worship her.” 28 When they heard this, they were enraged and shouted, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 29 The city was filled with the confusion, and people rushed together to the theater, dragging with them Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians who were Paul’s travel companions. 30 Paul wished to go into the crowd, but the disciples would not let him; 31 even some officials of the province of Asia who were friendly to him sent him a message urging him not to venture into the theater. 32 Meanwhile, some were shouting one thing, some another, for the assembly was in confusion, and most of them did not know why they had come together. 33 Some of the crowd gave instructions to Alexander, whom the Jews had pushed forward. And Alexander motioned for silence and tried to make a defense before the people. 34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, for about two hours all of them shouted in unison, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” 35 But when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, “Citizens of Ephesus, who is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the temple keeper of the great Artemis and of the statue that fell from heaven? 36 Since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rash. 37 You have brought these men here who are neither temple robbers nor blasphemers of our goddess. 38 If therefore Demetrius and the artisans with him have a complaint against anyone, the courts are open, and there are proconsuls; let them bring charges there against one another. 39 If there is anything further you want to know, it must be settled in the regular assembly. 40 For we are in danger of being charged with rioting today, since there is no cause that we can give to justify this commotion.” 41 When he had said this, he dismissed the assembly.



United Methodist Church

OF GENEVA

Prelude

Hi! I'm Rob Hamilton, Senior Pastor at UMCG and I'm a bit sad to be wrapping up this series on the book of Acts. We're going to be visiting with Paul in Ephesus today and we won't see him through to the end of the book of Acts when he gets to Rome. We're ending this series here, not because the several chapters that remain contain insignificant work of the Holy Spirit, but rather we've tracked many of the patterns of the Holy Spirit's work and a new series on grace starts next week. Today, I want to conclude our Spirited Adventures as the Holy Spirit has leads us to share the good news of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth by showing how being faithful to the Holy Spirit at work in us, isn't always easy. We've seen that a few times already in our series and in fact we need to be prepared to encounter resistance.

If you're just joining in on this series and are curious about the Spirited Adventures we've taken our YouTube channel can get you all caught up.

Let's take about 15 more minutes or so on the Spirited Adventures in the book of Acts, recognizing that in no way are our Spirited Adventures today are ending with this series. Please pause with me in a prayer of inspiration.

Prayer of Illumination

Jesus,

Send you Holy Spirit upon me to share the message you have for us today. Send your Spirit upon the ears, hearts and minds who share in your message and set us all on fire with love and zeal for the good news of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.



United Methodist Church OF GENEVA

Sermon

It was 1986, Father Gregory Boyle was ordained a Jesuit Priest just two years prior. His first stateside appointment has been the one he has had all these years: Dolores Mission Church. 36 years ago, Dolores Mission was the poorest Catholic parish in Los Angeles. Back then parish -that is the geographic region surrounding the church, the largest public housing projects west of the Mississippi at the time. These housing



projects also had the highest concentration of gang activity in LA. “That was saying something, given Los Angeles’ reputation as the gang capital of the world.”¹



Father Boyle, a young white man, had taken his vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and instead of fighting the gangs and cleaning up the streets with imperialistic fervor, he knew of all the places in LA and all the people of LA the people in his parish were desperate for the love of Jesus Christ. For it is in the love of Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit that true, lasting transformation happens in individuals and

communities. So Father Boyle embedded himself in the community. He came along side the people, got to know them. Hear their needs and let the Holy Spirit set him on a wild adventure.

Paul has done something similar in Ephesus. That’s where we find him in our reading today. Paul might not have been sent by the Spirit to a church in the midst of housing projects or the center of American gang activity, but he has embedded himself in the community for two years. The Spirit has him preaching

¹ <https://homeboyindustries.org/our-story/about-homeboy/>



United Methodist Church OF GENEVA

and teaching about Jesus. Lives are being transformed. Paul first baptized 12 persons with the Holy Spirit. More people started to believe in Jesus, others rejected the message and resisted it. Paul did healing miracles and there was so much power of the Holy Spirit in him that people would take handkerchiefs to catch his sweat and that somehow even Paul's sweat would exorcise demons and heal the sick. I don't know what to make of that, but to spend time on those details now might miss the point.



Eventually, the Holy Spirit transformed so many lives in the area through Paul's ministry that a band of magicians or sorcerers or medicine men were transformed to believe in Jesus and to give up their life following other, lesser Gods that they burned up all of their magic books worth 50,000 silver coins. Paul's time in Ephesus has been one wild adventure the past few years and as we've already heard it is about to get even wilder!

Back to Father Doyle, the Spirit has him on a wild adventure too. In 1988, in an effort to address the escalating problems and unmet needs of gang-involved youth, Boyle with church and community members began to develop positive opportunities for these young persons, including establishing an alternative school and a day care program, and seeking out legitimate employment. The problem



often was what neighbors want to live next to a place that is bringing members from rival gangs together. 'Won't that make an already dangerous areas and situation, that much more volatile? Won't even more kids, innocent kids be exposed to gangs or even killed in the likely cross-fire?' The programs for the gang-involved youth (which Boyle calls his 'homies') are much needed, no one disagrees with that... 'just not in my back yard' became the the voice of resistance.



United Methodist Church OF GENEVA

Paul is having a similar experience to Father Boyle. We heard it for Pastor Mary Gay. The local Ephesian Silversmiths Union, local 316, heard what happened with the magicians. The Spirit worked so mightily through Paul it put them out of business. The silversmiths have their living making household idols. Paul says the true God, shall not be idolized. Without idols like Artemis, these silversmiths will be out of a job. So the silversmiths stir up a riot. Most of the rioters don't even know why they're shouting, they're just drawn in by the energy, praising the primary goddess of the time Artemis. It's not that the silversmiths or rioters care all that much about Jesus, or God, they just don't want their way of life threatened, we don't want that Jesus guy and what he does to people in our back yards. I guess when one is faithful to the Spirit, one might be wise to expect some resistance and the resistance as we've heard might be of no small significance. In Paul's case, the resistance runs him out of town, but we know the Jesus movement continues in Ephesus anyway.

Might we discover the Holy Spirit leading us to reach people in our neighborhood, family or workplace and might we be met with resistance? Maybe it won't be a riot or impassioned zoning board. Maybe resistance comes in the form of withdrawing from relationship if we persist in following the Spirit? Maybe the resistance is in us and not wanting to garner some reputation of loving like Jesus in ways that might make us stick out socially? Maybe the resistance is the fear of rejection by others if we share our beliefs? Maybe we're the ones that don't have a personal stake in what new thing the Spirit is doing, we just don't want that new thing in our back yard or in our church? Whatever the case, if we're being faithful to the Spirit, we need to expect resistance. But something happens when we remain faithful, trust the Holy Spirit and persist in the adventure the Holy Spirit has set us on. Father Doyle's story really bring it home.

Eventually, the programs Doyle and the community pushed for as led by the Spirit birthed Homeboy Industries promoting jobs, not jail for gang-involved youth. Today, Homeboy Industries is the largest and most successful gang rehabilitation and re-entry program in the world. Homeboy offers an exit ramp for those stuck in a cycle of violence and incarceration. They support 10,000 men and women a year as they work to overcome their pasts, re-imagine their futures, and break the inter-generational cycles of gang violence. With free therapy and case management; tattoo removal, work readiness programs, and legal assistance; and job training-focused business skills through Homeboy Bakery, Homegirl Café, and Homeboy Silkscreen & Embroidery. All of which provide healing alternatives to



United Methodist Church

OF GENEVA

gang life, while creating safer and healthier communities - and setting all sort of people on a wild Spirited Adventure to the ends of the earth or into the heart of America's gangs and where the Spirit is leading you and me and our church.

Sometimes its hard to know if the resistance is worth it. If persisting on the Spirited Adventure will produce fruit and change lives. Paul left town and it took him a while to really see the full fruit of the Spirit in Ephesus. In Father Doyle's case he stood with his 'homies' persisting in a wild, loving adventure, for us it will be others. I want to give Father Doyle the last word in this message as a testimony to the power of the Holy Spirit and the transforming love of Jesus Christ when he spoke at a pre-covid commencement at Pepperdine University. ([Click here to watch](#)).