Acts Chapter 19

Acts 19:1-10

* In this opening story of the chapter Luke is introducing Paul’s ministry in Ephesus, which is the longest we’ve known him to stay somewhere yet - two years!
* When he meets some disciples he asks if they’ve received the Holy Spirit. They were taught by Apollos before he understood the story of Pentecost and received the Spirit himself.
* The disciples received the Spirit - Pentecost caught up with them!
* This story invites us to think of how we know the Spirit. How do we see the Holy Spirit active in our lives of faith? Do we forget the active presence of God at times and expect everything to stay the same? Where do we see the Spirit present in the church? If we embrace the movement of the Spirit what does that mean for us?
* Paul continues in Ephesus in his typical way - beginning at a synagogue and moving onto the house of a gentile when some objected. He was able to work in and teach the people about the Holy Spirit for two years.

Acts 19:11-22

* In Paul’s time at Ephesus, the power of God is shown in incredible ways. Ephesus was a place of great political, religious, commercial, and spiritual power, so the beginning of this story shows us the power of God in that place of great worldly power.
* Seeing the power that God was showing in Ephesus, some itinerant exorcists wanted to get a bit of that power for themselves. So they started adding Jesus’ name into their exorcisms, assuming that would be enough. They did not become disciples or follow Jesus, they just tried to use his name like a magic word.
* This didn’t work, which reminds us that God’s power is not a magic trick for us to tap into. We can’t just pray the “right” way or say the “right” words and expect everything to happen the way we want it to.
* In this case, how does our relationship with God and our lives of prayer tap into the power of God? Where do we see the power of God at work in our lives, in our church, and in the world?
* Having culminated his ministry in Ephesus, Paul resolves to continue on his journey. Despite the clear showing of the power of God in Ephesus, things will still not be smooth sailing for Paul in the world.

Acts 19:23-41

* Paul makes it clear here that he is determined to go to Rome, as he feels God is calling him there. It will take a lot of time for him to get there, but this reminds us that God will keep calling us, no matter how long the journey takes.
* The riot that breaks out toward the end of Paul’s time in Ephesus is a pretty wild tale of the results of idolatry.
* The silversmiths worship both Artemis and the money they make off of the idols they make of her. They have two forms of idolatry that egg one another on. Their livelihoods and what they have believed in their whole lives.
* The tension between idolatry and the commands of the kingdom of God lead to a riot, that when it’s calmed down, we see was not based in any legal course of action. Paul and his people had not been directly blaspheming the idol Artemis, they had just been proclaiming God.
* Before this riot people had been making changes in their lives that cost a lot of money. What is the church willing to give up to be in line with the kingdom of God? What idols threaten to move us away from God’s realm and into the world?

