

Acts 20: 1-6

Christ in Chaos

8/21/16

After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. ² When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. ³ There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴ Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. ⁵ These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, ⁶ but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days.

(Pastor Prays)

If God does exist and he is good and loving and kind as everyone says, why am I in such a terrible spot? If God does live me and desires good for me, where is he in the chaos of my pain and broken heart and frustration. Where is he as I try to work and live and figure out my life? This could have very well been the kinds of questions on Paul's mind as we join him in Acts 20. I mean he is living his life, trying to honor God but it just seems like everywhere he goes there is chaos. Every chapter in Acts is filled with frustrations and set back and failures and how easy is it to feel like a failure. Raising a child of making a living or even trying to stay married. In Christ, how do we manage chaos, honor God and not get overwhelmed with all the demands on you? How do you keep from feeling like you gotta keep all the balls in the air and the plates spinning and still find time for family or even for yourself in all this chaos? How do we focus? How did Paul focus when there is so much to do and what seems like so little time? It's good to be reminded that...

Christ Is LORD of your chaos

Let's look at this little picture of Paul and see if we can't try and remember a few things.

I. Remember That People are the Mission

Not your job or money, not your promotion or rank. People – more importantly, seeing people come to Christ. It's the whole mission of the whole bible and it must dominate all we do even in our chaos. It's right there in v. 1. *When the uproar had ended*, In Chapter 19, there was chaos in Ephesus. Some believers were dragged into the melee' and notice in V. 1 that as soon as it was practical, Paul sent for the disciples to encourage them. We will deal with the word "encourage" in my next point. But I want you to see Paul's dogged determination to people regardless of the chaos. God providentially had Paul at Ephesus in chaos to reach people just as he providentially has you where you work and live and go to school, to reach people. We talk about

living sent at Hickory Grove. Living sent is not you going on all the mission trips you can. Living sent is you living in your neighborhood and your school and your job as one sent by God. Our mission is not to build castles made of sand here on earth. Our mission is to build the kingdom of God that lasts for eternity and it's made up of people. Let me ask you a question. How many of your neighbors know you are a Christian because they have heard you talk about Christ or how good God is or your church? Statistics tell us there is a majority of people in the neighborhood that would come to church if you would invite them. I'm thankful to God for all the resources and land and programs at Hickory Grove but let's you and I never forget that people are the mission and they are all around us and we are thrown in to chaos to shoe hurt people the solid rock that is Jesus Christ. Isn't that what we sing? "On Christ the Solid Rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand." And people that you know need not only see it in your life, they need to hear it. Christ is the Lord of your chaos. He put us in it to remember that people are the mission. And if people are the mission...

II. **Remember Investment is our Currency**

What I mean by that is that our investment in people is the way we make impacts. Let me show you what I mean. V. 1-2, *When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and, after encouraging them, said goodbye and set out for Macedonia.* ² *He traveled through that area, speaking many words of encouragement to the people, and finally arrived in Greece,* Paul is encouraging them. V. 2, He gave them much encouragement. That word "encouragement", used twice in quick succession, is not how we would use the word. Sort of a positive pat on the back that makes us feel better about ourselves and our future. This word is more powerful. A better translation might be the word exhortation. It's the act of biblical counsel and advice from the bible. It's the consolation that you give a grieving widow. A consolation that goes beyond the natural emptiness you feel for people you love and into the strengthening of God's word. And there is nothing that strengthens the people of God like the Word of God and Paul is investing himself in a discipleship friendship with his brothers in Christ and points them to Christ. It's also worth noting that in v. 1-2, he calls for his disciples. In v. 3, his disciples warn him of danger and in v. 4-5, Luke gives us a list of men that Paul is investing his life into. Don't you think it is noteworthy that in all his missionary journeys, wherever he went, he never traveled alone. He was always pouring into some young men. This was more than an accountability group. This was a community and it wasn't just Paul pouring into his companions. He benefited from them traveling with him, going before him and surrounding him. Look, Christ didn't just purchase individual people, he purchased a people – the church. And we are designed to live in closer community than what most of us are living in. Something you should do is study the phrase "one-another" in the New Testament and all the times that phrase is used to describe how the church is to live and then press beyond what you are comfortable with and extend these casual acquaintances into real Christ driven friendship. I'm sure your life is in chaos but Christ is Lord

of your chaos. Just remember people are our mission and investment is our currency.

III. **In Christ, Set Backs Are the Norm**

What I mean is that as a believer in the atoning work of Christ on the cross, we believe in our ultimate victory in Christ. But while we are on earth, it genuinely can feel like we move from one setback or problems, to the next. Paul faced it. In v. 3, he departed Macedonia but then was forced to go back to Macedonia because someone wanted to kill him. It was a setback but, in the crucified life, setbacks are the norm. This shows us something we have got to learn as we run into this brave new world. Paul was able to press every circumstance into service of his Master. Look, a setback is not the end. A sovereign God purchased his people by the blood of Christ on the cross. What Paul wrote in Phil 4:3 would be very appropriate to end with. I'm sure it's been misused, especially around the Olympics, so let's quote it in context. Your setback is where God has placed you for you to learn of his Grace and not your strength. Listen to what Paul says in Philippians 4:12-13. *²I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me.*

Not your great resilience. Through Christ. Life is chaos. Jesus Christ lived through and mastered the chaos, died on the cross in the place of sinners, satisfying the justice of God so that the cross now displays the mercy of God. And it's that mercy – kindness – that calls you to turn from sin and turn to Jesus Christ, the Lord of the chaotic universe.

(Pastor prays)