

Theme: "Apart from Jesus there is no salvation"

Text: Acts 19: 1 – 22

Date: September 25, 2016

Season: 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, CO

Grace and peace to you as you let the Holy Spirit work in your life, from God, our Father our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we are traveling with the Apostle Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke and others on the third missionary journey. The group started in Antioch-Syria, visited the congregations that the Apostle Paul had establish in Tarsus, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch-Pisidia and Laodicea on the way to Ephesus. Ephesus was the final city that the Apostle Paul had visited on his second missionary journey and he had promised to come back to this city as he left some of his fellow works there, Priscilla and Aquila. As the Apostle Paul arrives in Ephesus we are told, **'There he found some disciples. And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?'"** (Acts 19: 1b-2)

This is an interesting question isn't it? **"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"** Now I'm sure that the Apostle Paul didn't start off his conversation with these men with this question, but during the conversation with them some drought must have come to him about their faith, so he asked, **"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"**

What would you say to someone who ask you this question? Would you say, "No or I'm not sure." If so than you would have answered the way that these men did, telling the Apostle Paul that there was an important element missing from their lives, for **they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."** (Acts 19:3)

You see the Holy Spirit is the source of your faith and belief in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. For many of us here the Holy Spirit came into our lives when we were brought to our Baptism, as a child. We had no knowledge of God at the time and through the waters of our baptism we were washed clean of all our sins and given the Holy Spirit to work in our lives through God's Word and Sacraments so that faith can begin in our lives. As God's Word came into our lives the Holy Spirit enabled us to believe and then to grow in our faith and trust in God as our Creator Father, our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ and our sanctifier, the Holy Spirit.

Why do we need the Holy Spirit in our lives? Because we were once spiritually dead and blind to who God is, but by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives through God's Word we have come to know and trust in God. Yes, true faith in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior comes by the Holy Spirit working in our lives through God's Word and Sacraments. So we are told by Luke that, **'On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. [6] And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. [7] There were about twelve men in all.'** (Acts 19: 5-7) Some of us here today have noticed the Holy Spirit working in our lives, by bring us here today or by giving us a better understanding of all that God has done for us, but in most cases the Holy Spirit doesn't come out as speaking in tongues or prophesying, but as a greater trust and assurance that God is working in our lives through His Word and Sacraments.

So how does God work in our lives to bring us to the kingdom of God? By the Holy Spirit working through God's Word and Sacraments. This is called God's Means of Grace. As we hear God's Word and partake in His Sacraments we are receiving the means by which God give to us His grace of forgiveness of our sins and life everlasting. We can receive this forgiveness in no other way then through the Holy Spirit working in our lives through God's Word and Sacraments. Thus the importance of being in God's Word and partaking in God's Sacraments, for through them God, the Holy Spirit, is working in our lives to strengthen our faith so that we can meet the trial and difficulties of our life and share the Good News of God's Love, Grace and Mercy with others. That's just what we hear the Apostle Paul was doing as Luke tells us, **'And Paul entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God. [9] But when some became stubborn and continued in unbelief, speaking evil of the Way before the congregation, he withdrew from them and took the disciples with him, reasoning daily in the hall of Tyrannus. [10] This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.'** (Acts 19:8-10)

How does God build up His church? Through US, you and me, as we share the Good News of Jesus Christ with others. As we share our love and hope in God with our family, friends and anyone we meet in our lives we are building up God's Church by the Holy Spirit working through our words. Sharing our faith in God with the help of the Holy Spirit doesn't mean that it will be

easy, because there will be some who will continue to be stubborn in their unbelief and the Devil will work in their lives to speak evil against God and us. When this happened to the Apostle Paul he learned to move away from those who were causing the problems and continue to do the work with those who had an interest in learning more about the love, grace and mercy of God. You could say that in Ephesus the Apostle Paul started the first Seminary and by those who had learned about God's Love, Grace and Mercy all the residents of Asia came to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. This happened because of people just like you and me, who shared their knowledge of God with others and let the Holy Spirit do His work of bring others to faith and trust in God.

So how do we become better participants in God's Church? By let the Holy Spirit work in our lives. That means being in God's Word, not just on Sunday, but every day by reading and studying of His Word; By growing in our understanding of God's Word and making it a bigger part of our lives, which means we will share God's Word through our words and actions; By encouraging others to get more involved in God's Word and participate more in God's Sacraments we grow even more in God's love, grace and mercy. Yes, each of us can participate in the building up of God's Church by sharing our love, trust and knowledge of God with our family, friends and all those we meet and relate to in our life, for this is God's will for our lives as a member of His Church.

Will God's means of Grace change our lives? Yes, God's Means of Grace can change our lives as Luke tells us about the changes that happened in Ephesus, **'And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled. [18] Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. [19] And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. [20] So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.'** (Acts 19:17-20)

When we let God's means of Grace be a part of our lives it changes us and maintains us in the love, grace and mercy of God, which is different from the ways of the world. We come to God confessing our sins and receiving God's absolution of our forgiveness through the life, death

and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We acknowledge that God is working in our lives and we desire to have God ways to be a bigger part of our lives. We let the Holy Spirit work in our lives so that we can share the love, grace and mercy of God with others. As we let God's means of Grace work in our lives the world around us starts to notice a difference and that can have a positive effect on our world, but at the same time it will cause others to try to stop God's means of Grace from becoming an even bigger part of the world, which comes by the encouragement of the Devil.

Yes, as we learned about last week and as we are reminded again this week, the devil will work in those who don't believe in God and even sometimes in those who say that they do believe, to try to stop the truth of God's Love, grace and mercy from being shared with all the world. So it's important that we let the Holy Spirit work in our lives to strengthen our faith and trust in God so that we can be ready for those who would want to persecute us and try to take God's Love, grace and mercy from us. Oh, there may not be a riot like there was in Ephesus, but we can learn from what happened in Ephesus to understand better how God is working in the world to help us, even in the toughest situations to enable God's Word to be share with more and more people as we let the Holy Spirit work in our lives through God's Word and Sacraments.

We also can learn from the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Acts of the Apostles that God is in control and sometime we just need to keep on doing what God has led us to do and not try to take control of all that is happening. The Apostle Paul was encouraged not to get involved with the riot assemble, but to move on and to continue to encourage and build up the believers in other places. By letting God be in control of our lives we to can be an encouragement to others in their faith as we share the love of God with others so that they may hear the Good News and be strengthened by the Holy Spirit working in their lives. Amen.