



Approaching God

Read this portion of Psalm 39 and begin with an opening prayer

“When I was silent and still, not even saying anything good, my anguish increased. My heart grew hot within me, and as I meditated, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue. Show me, O LORD, my life’s end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is.” (Ps. 39:2-4)

When we suffer, our first impulse is to complain, but here David muzzles that impulse and turns that same energy into a burning meditation on the fleeting brevity of life and his hope in a constant God. Ask God to turn any grief into gladness today as you consider the unchanging nature and promises of God in Christ.

Acts 19:21-40

Passage Introduction: A Riot in Ephesus

Acts 19:23 is one of the most understated verses in all the Bible. Just when things were supposed to go according to Paul’s plans, a seismic disturbance shook things up. “The Way” was shorthand for the Christian Church and its gospel, and a man named Demetrius was greatly perturbed by its progress and its potential to disturb his way of life (v 24).

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words.

Artemis:

Greek name for the Roman goddess Diana She was the most powerful divinity in the area. In the past a meteorite had smashed into the surface of the earth near Ephesus, and the people had regarded it as a gift from heaven - a statue of herself. The temple of Artemis was the religious center of the the whole area. Archaeologists have found dozens of her statutes.

Acts 19:21-40 - 21 After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to Jerusalem, passing through Macedonia and Achaia. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must visit Rome also.” **22** He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia, while he stayed in the province of Asia a little longer. **23** About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. **24** A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in a lot of business for the craftsmen there. **25** He called them together, along with the workers in related trades, and said: “You know, my friends, that we receive a good income from this business. **26** And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all. **27** There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited; and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty.” **28** When they heard this, they were furious and began shouting: “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” **29** Soon the whole

Use the space in the margin to jot down notes, or themes/ideas that stand out as important.

city was in an uproar. The people seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia, and all of them rushed into the theater together. **30** Paul wanted to appear before the crowd, but the disciples would not let him. **31** Even some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, sent him a message begging him not to venture into the theater. **32** The assembly was in confusion: Some were shouting one thing, some another. Most of the people did not even know why they were there. **33** The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander to the front, and they shouted instructions to him. He motioned for silence in order to make a defense before the people. **34** But when they realized he was a Jew, they all shouted in unison for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" **35** The city clerk quieted the crowd and said: "Fellow Ephesians, doesn't all the world know that the city of Ephesus is the guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of her image, which fell from heaven? **36** Therefore, since these facts are undeniable, you ought to calm down and not do anything rash. **37** You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess. **38** If, then, Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a grievance against anybody, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. They can press charges. **39** If there is anything further you want to bring up, it must be settled in a legal assembly. **40** As it is, we are in danger of being charged with rioting because of what happened today. In that case we would not be able to account for this commotion, since there is no reason for it."

Questions for Reflection & Meditation

- What are 2 or 3 things you observe about God the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit in this passage?
- Imagine that you are caught up in the crowd in the amphitheater (vv. 29-34). What do you see, hear and think? What are your emotions
- What do you think is the balance between ineffective preaching of a "gospel" which makes no impact on real life and a noisy, personally and socially offensive proclamation?

Close in Prayer:

Pray that the power of God will be evident in your life, not as a demonstration for its own sake or for your sake, but as a natural result of submission to God..