**Jesus Stuff**

Find Acts 19.

For much of my miss-spent youth I was going to be a mountain man. Not the kind that rides horses into the wilderness only coming out once a year. I was going to be a more modern mountain man. I was going to be the kind of mountain man that owned a pickup truck with a camper. If I had a pickup truck with a camper I could go anywhere and wouldn’t even need a camp site.

* I could drive deep into the woods on an old 2-track. If a tree happened to fall across the path - no sweat, I’d have an ax a chain saw in the back.
* If I pull up to a campsite and someone couldn’t their car started because the battery is dead – “*Stop banging your head on the hood. I have jumper cables right here in my truck*.”
* I would keep a couple of tackle boxes, neatly organized with the lures for whatever wilderness fishing spot I might find.
* If I came across someone stuck in a ditch, well I’d have a winch and a come-a-long to pull him right out.

My truck and camper would have everything I need to start a fire, skin and butcher a deer or bear, trap beaver and martin, and survive a zombie attack. Not really, we didn’t have zombies in those days.

I was going to be a mountain man alright – that is until I discovered I was good at boring people – so I became a preacher.

I learned something along the way. Reading Outdoor Life and owning mountain man tools will not make me a mountain man. To be a mountain man requires first that I know mountain man-ness, and second I’d have to pretty much be doing mountain man stuff.

*While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”*

*So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?” “John’s baptism,” they replied. Paul said, “John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.* Acts 19:1-6

Faith alone does not make one an effective follower of Jesus. To be an effective Christ follower requires that we know Jesus and that we’re doing Jesus stuff.

The people in this story were people of faith, Luke called them disciples, but it wasn’t faith in knowledge of Jesus. It was Hebrew faith based on John the Baptist’s call to repentance. So they repented of sins, were baptized, and accepted forgiveness.

Even though John’s preaching identified Jesus as the Messiah (John knew his role was to point to Jesus) these disciples weren’t doing Jesus stuff. Their proud allegiance was to John and his message of repentance, but John’s preaching didn’t tell them all that Jesus would do.

They had a religion of preparation for the Messiah but they didn’t have the power of the Messiah, just like I had prepared to be a mountain man but didn’t actually move to the mountains. Paul proclaimed to them complete knowledge of Jesus, the fulfillment of what John preached.

The disciples, twelve in all, accepted Paul’s message, were baptized, and immediately began doing Jesus stuff.

I’m sure their conversation involved much more that what is reported here. It’s common to record only the highlights.We can illustrate this principle with the story of a man who asked his son, *Did you go to church yesterday*? The boy answered that he had.

* *What was the sermon about?*
* *Sin!*
* *What did the preacher say?*
* *He’s against it.*

Many religious Christians hear only the saving part of the message of Christ but don’t get to the part about the Holy Spirit enabling them to do Jesus stuff. Many don’t receive the Holy Spirit – or they’re resistant to Him, perhaps they fear the eccentricity some other Christians display.

Knowing Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit isn’t about and speaking in tongues and predicting things. It’s about praise and proclaiming the truth. Speaking in tongues is about worship. Prophecy is about teaching obedience to God. That’s why our vision is *Knowing and Growing in Christ*.

We may have “John’s disciple” type people right here in our church, people who know the truth but miss the Holy Spirit, satisfied with Christian religion but lacking real indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In our study of Acts we’re seeing how the Holy Spirit lived in the Christians of the first century making them effective witnesses doing Jesus stuff.

There was a Jewish synagogue in Ephesus. Like always Paul started his mission work in the synagogue. For three months he “*spoke boldly*” or “*freely*”. Luke used this word παρρησιαζομαι six times of Paul: *he spoke with boldness!*

Years later Paul asked the church in Ephesus to, *Pray for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will* ***boldly*** *make known the mystery of the gospel,for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it* ***boldly****, as I should.* Ephesians 6:19f.

He had such confidence in what he was saying that he was unafraid to be challenged by listeners. He spoke boldly and he argued persuasively. Ben has told about this word διαλεγομαι a couple of times now. It means he declared the truth and defended it with credible evidence in open discussion.

We all know that some people aren’t convinced with credible evidence. They believe what they believe and will not listen to any opposing ideas. We seem to be afflicted with this in America these days.

As you can expect some of those who dialoged with Paul already believed what they believed and would not listen to an opposing idea. The text says they “*became obstinate*” (verse 9). The verb is σκληρυνω. You’ve heard of arteriosclerosis, hardening of the arteries. These people hardened their minds so that the truth Paul proclaimed couldn’t get through.

*They refused to believe*. (vs. 9) That’s a calculated decision. It’s not because Paul was wrong or that he didn’t support his teaching. He was very good using the Old Testament as evidence of the Gospel. Ben showed us that clearly last week.

More than that, they spoke evil of Paul, kind of like people on Facebook who instead of discussing an issue with evidence and logic, choose to call each other names. They dismiss ideas not because the ideas are wrong but because the speaker is a “Trumpet” or a “libtard”.

Some people in the synagogue dismissed Paul with insults and spoke evil of the Christian Gospel, so Paul called an audible. With the 12 disciples of John who had believed the truth he moved his teaching to the Hall of Tyrannus.

Tyrannus was a Greek rhetorician. We would call him a talking head. He operated a lecture hall where people would come to hear new philosophies, very similar to the Areopagus of chapter 17, sort of a Greek “think tank”.

Paul probably used the hall from 11-4 when Tyrannus wasn’t using it. 11-4 were the hours of rest when most activity came to a stop and people were free to listen to someone like Paul, which they often did for entertainment. Remember, they didn’t have TV.

Paul did more than share a new philosophy. He preached Jesus, crucified and resurrected. He preached the Kingdom of God and God’s rule over life. He called them to receive Jesus, the true King.

Paul was so much more than a “*wanna be*” Jesus follower. He had real knowledge of Jesus and he did Jesus stuff. He spoke boldly in the Hall of Tyrannus for two years, *so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.* Verse 10

How do you think Paul’s message reached throughout the province of Asia? He certainly couldn’t have spoken to everyone in all the towns and villages. I suggest that the people who heard and believed experienced a contagious joy and **they** told the people they came in contact with, thus multiplying Paul’s mission.

The text tells us that *God did uncommon things of power through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.* Verses 11f

The Holy Spirit manifested His power through Paul in the name of Jesus. A sweat rag or a tentmaker’s apron that Paul used became a conduit for the Spirit’s power. People were healed. Evil spirits couldn’t resist the power of Jesus’ name.

An interesting thing happened. I should preface this by pointing out that people then were rather superstitious. They believed in spiritual power of idols. They believed that sickness and disease, especially mental illness, were the result of demons taking up residence in a man. Exorcism was a common trade.

They believed that if an exorcist knew the name of a more powerful spirit than the one affecting a man, by invoking the name of that more powerful spirit they could overpower the evil spirit and make it come out.

Every good thing attracts counterfeits, even the good power of Jesus’ name. Some itinerant exorcists, seven brothers we’re told decided to use the name of Jesus, having seen the power displayed through Paul and thinking they would drive out spirits.

One day they came upon an evil spirit that was unyielding to their incantations. This spirit recognized that they didn’t know Jesus. Only a person who truly knows Jesus and in whom Jesus lives possesses the power of His name.

*“Jesus I know, and I know Paul, but who are you?” Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.* Verses 15f

The evil spirit’s response is revealing, “*Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?”* There are three Greek words that can be translated “know”.

* οιδα – knowing content
* γινωσκω – personal practical knowledge
* επισταμαι – a more logical knowledge, understanding – you just get it

It’s like this: *I know Jesus personally, we lived in the same place once. I know all about Paul. I’ve seen him around. Who the heck are you guys?* So he beat them up.

Can you imagine how many cell phone videos there would be if that happened today? It’d be all over Facebook and Instagram and YouTube before they got home. Even without that kind of media word got around Ephesus of what happened.

*When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor*. Verse 17

Luke included this anecdote not to be snarky but because it’s true and it shows what happens when Jesus followers really know Jesus and are doing Jesus stuff.

*Many of those who believed now came and openly confessed their evil deeds. A number who had practiced sorcery brought their scrolls together and burned them publicly. When they calculated the value of the scrolls, the total came to fifty thousand drachmas.* Verses 18f

The Gospel has power to generate moral reform. People confessed that their superstitious deed were evil. They made a public repudiation of their now former beliefs by burning their “*grammata*”, the scrolls and parchments of magic, which happen to be mostly “*gibberish and rigmarole - words and names considered to be unusually potent*.” (F.F. Bruce, pg. 392)

How serious were they? Fifty thousand drachmas is a year wages of 150 men. Is it any surprise that…*the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power.* Verse 20

Once again there are some lessons in this that we can apply to our context. Here are four:

1. Effective Jesus followers know Jesus and do Jesus stuff.

There’s a difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus. It’s the difference between religion and relationship.

People who know about Jesus are seldom transformed by it. They like Him and they like His church, but they like a lot of other things too, and those other things often come between them and Jesus stuff. Knowing about Jesus doesn’t motivate. Knowing Jesus does.

Knowing Jesus is enough to motivate things like worship, service, sacrifice, growing in Christ, sharing the Gospel. No one has to nag or shame us to act. It comes naturally from our love relationship with the Savior.

1. There’s power in the name of Jesus!

There’s a difference between doing Jesus stuff in the power of His name and doing Jesus stuff in our own power.

Our own power is limited. That’s why some people get bored or tired and stop doing things like worship, service, sacrifice, growing in Christ, sharing the Gospel. The power of Jesus’ name is unlimited.

* In the power of Jesus’ name we continue ministry as long as we live.
* In the power of Jesus’ name we don’t say thing like, “*I’ve done my time. The young people should be doing it now*.” Instead we recognize that God has trained us and given us a good share of wisdom so we continue to serve His bride, the church.
* In the power of Jesus’ name we speak the Gospel boldly and freely, unafraid to be challenged.
* In the power of Jesus’ name our lives are changed, and we know it can change any man’s life if he would surrender to the Lord.

There’s power in the name of Jesus!

1. You can’t play games with Jesus’ name.

I guess I should correct myself. You can play games with Jesus’ name, but it doesn’t fool God (or most people) and it’s dangerous. The fourth of the Ten Commandments says, *You must never misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.* Exodus 20:7

This is about much more than not using Jesus’ name as part of a curse. It does include how we speak His name, but it’s more about how we claim His name in our lives. If we’re going to claim the name of Jesus we better be serious.

The Seven Sons of Sceva found that out. Their use of Jesus’ name was impotent because they didn’t really know Him. If you’re not serious about Jesus, you probably shouldn’t pretend. You may not get beaten by an evil spirit and chased out of the church naked, but you won’t have the power of Jesus’ name. The Jesus stuff you do won’t be effective. It’ll make you feel better, but it won’t impress anyone else.

I challenge every person listening to me, make a decision. Either be serious about Jesus or drop the charade. You can’t play games with Jesus’ name.

1. Preach Jesus first and reform second.

Christians often get this backwards. Here in our worship services we preach reform because we assume you’re here because you’ve already responded to Jesus.

If you haven’t yet decided about Jesus’ place in your life, don’t get discouraged. When we finish our study of Acts, Ben and I are going to do a series of sermons about what it means to accept Jesus and how that changes us.

We’re calling it “Reckless Love” because it’s all about how God risks loving us knowing that we may choose not to love Him in return. We’ll probably begin this series Sept. 16.

Commercial’s over, back to this fourth lesson. Here in our worship services we preach reform because we are primarily people who know Jesus and we want to do Jesus stuff. We don’t expect folks who don’t know Jesus to be committed to reform.

When we speak with people outside of Christ, we preach Jesus, crucified and resurrected, seated at the right hand of God. Jesus first, reform second.

I gave up on being a mountain man but I’ve never lost the siren call of the woods. I love to hunt and fish, and I’d be a trapper if I had the time, **Oh**, and I own a truck although without the camper.

I’ve never forgotten the lesson I learned, owning mountain man tools doesn’t make me a mountain man. To be a mountain man I need to know mountain man-ness and do mountain man stuff.

To be an effective Jesus follower I need first to know Jesus, and second I need to do Jesus stuff. To be an effective Jesus follower you need first to know Jesus, and second you need to do Jesus stuff.