

Media and Graphics Notes

Word of Witness Video?	Yes
Sermon Starter Video?	Yes
Sermon Notes?	There is a video of the Selma movie trailer near the beginning of the sermon. There is a map of Thessalonica near the middle of the sermon
Other Notes	We will baptize and receive new members at the 11 a.m. worship service. At the 8:30 a.m. worship service, we will recognize the new members we will be receiving at 11 a.m. At both the 8:30 and 11 a.m. service we will say the Apostles' Creed responsively after recognizing or receiving new members and before Joys and Concerns.

Key Questions, Metadata and Outline

What is this sermon about?

This sermon is about how we might learn from and live the revolutionary lifestyle of Jesus and the early Christians.



Why is this sermon important?

This sermon is important because it is a reminder that the call to follow Jesus is not always an easy road.

What is the context of this sermon?

This sermon is preached on the third Sunday in Lent. A family of five is joining the church at the 11 a.m. worship service, including baptism of their three children. Also, daylight savings time begins today. This sermon and series were developed using *The Renegade Gospel*¹ by Mike Slaughter as a guide.

What are the next action steps?

The time of preparation to celebrate Easter is the perfect time to be honest with yourself about the way you are living in response to the good news of Jesus Christ.

- Is the Kingdom of God my top priority?
- Do my actions indicate that I follow Jesus?
- Do others see something unusual or curious about the way I live?

¹ Mike Slaughter, *Renegade Gospel: The Rebel Jesus* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014)

- Am I willing to cause trouble and disturb the peace because of my faith?
- Is Christ real to me?

What is the good news (bottom line)?

Here is the good news: when we profess Jesus as Lord, the Holy Spirit which empowers believers for a revolutionary lifestyle, lives in us.

Metadata

1. Topic(s)
 1. Grow
 2. Changing Lives
 3. Making Disciples
2. Sermon Books of the Bible
 1. Acts
 2. Luke
 3. Matthew
3. Series
 1. Renegade Gospel
4. Speaker
 1. Andrew Conard
5. Tags
 1. renegade, gospel, life, change, revolution, renegade, Paul, conversion, Christianity

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Acts 17:1-15, CEB

1 Paul and Silas journeyed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, then came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. 2 As was Paul's custom, he entered the synagogue and for three Sabbaths interacted with them on the basis of the scriptures. 3 Through his interpretation of the scriptures, he demonstrated that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. He declared, "This Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ." 4 Some were convinced and joined Paul and Silas, including a larger number of Greek God-worshippers and quite a few prominent women.

5 But the Jews became jealous and brought along some thugs who were hanging out in the marketplace. They formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They attacked Jason's house, intending to bring Paul and Silas before the people. 6 When they didn't find them, they dragged Jason and some believers before the city officials. They were shouting, "These people who have been disturbing the peace throughout the empire have also come here. 7 What is more, Jason has welcomed them into his home. Every one of them does what is contrary to Caesar's decrees by naming someone else as king: Jesus." 8 This provoked the crowd and the city officials even more. 9 After Jason and the others posted bail, they released them.

10 As soon as it was dark, the brothers and sisters sent Paul and Silas on to Beroea. When they arrived, they went to the Jewish synagogue. 11 The Beroean Jews were more honorable than those in Thessalonica. This was evident in the great eagerness with which they accepted the word and examined the scriptures each day to see whether Paul and Silas' teaching was true. 12 Many came to believe, including a number of reputable Greek women and many Greek men. 13 The Jews from Thessalonica learned that Paul also proclaimed God's word in Beroea, so they went there too and were upsetting and disturbing the crowds. 14 The brothers and sisters sent Paul away to the seacoast at once, but Silas and Timothy remained at Beroea. 15 Those who escorted Paul led him as far as Athens, then returned with instructions for Silas and Timothy to come to him as quickly as possible.

Response to Scripture

One: The Word of God for the People of God.

All: Thanks be to God!

Introduction

Sermon Starter Video

Play sermon starter video.

*** Start Sermon Timer ***

Series Review

Jesus didn't come to start a religion. The rebel Jesus came with a renegade gospel to start a revolution. Join First United Methodist Church in worship as we discover Jesus all over again.

Sermon Notes and Scripture Study

I invite you to open your bulletin to a place where you can take notes during the message today. Today, I hope that you will hear:

- Something new or find new questions
- Perspective on your life or something in your life that gives additional meaning to the message today.
- Guidance about how to live as a disciple of Jesus.

I invite you to write down some of the things that you hear in the sermon today and take your bulletin home as a tool to grow in your faith outside of worship. You can reflect on what you heard today, pray for people of our congregation and read scripture to prepare for worship next week.

Prayer

Will you pray with me? O God, use these words to speak good news so that as individuals and as a congregation we will fear nothing but sin, desire nothing but you and live as part of your kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Selma to Montgomery Marches

In March of 1965, 50 years ago there were three marches from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. These marches “were part of the Selma Voting Rights Movement and led to the passage that year of the Voting Rights Act, a landmark federal achievement of the 1960s American Civil Rights Movement.”²

“Activists publicized the three protest marches to walk the 54 mile-highway from Selma to the Alabama state capital of Montgomery as showing the desire of black American citizens to exercise their constitutional right to vote, in defiance of segregationist repression.”³

“The first march took place on March 7, 1965. ... The march gained the nickname “Bloody Sunday” after its 600 marchers were attacked at the Edmund Pettus Bridge

² Wikipedia contributors, "Selma to Montgomery marches," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Selma_to_Montgomery_marches&oldid=650250592 (accessed March 7, 2015).

³ Wikipedia contributors, "Selma to Montgomery marches," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Selma_to_Montgomery_marches&oldid=650250592 (accessed March 7, 2015).

after leaving Selma; state troopers and county posse attacked the unarmed marchers with billy clubs and tear gas.”⁴

These events are depicted in the 2014 film, Selma. Here is a portion of the trailer for that movie. Let’s take a look:

Play “2015-03-08 Selma Trailer - Edited”



You can almost imagine the words of scripture being used 50 years ago in Selma: “These people who have been disturbing the peace throughout the empire have come here.”⁵

The story of Selma took place not so long ago here in the United States. It is a story of faith, justice and persecution. It is a story of living a revolutionary lifestyle.

Transition

The scripture passage for today also tells a story of faith, persecution and living a revolutionary lifestyle. This time, not in the 60’s in the United States, but in the first century in the Roman Empire. Let’s go back to that world for a moment.

Christianity in the Early Roman Empire

You remember that for “the first three hundred years after Jesus ..., the church was illegal. This time period is frequently referred to as the “age of the martyrs,” when there were ten great government-sponsored persecutions against the church, some that were spurred on by local Roman authorities and others that were Empire-wide. ...

⁴ Wikipedia contributors, "Selma to Montgomery marches," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Selma_to_Montgomery_marches&oldid=650250592 (accessed March 7, 2015).

⁵ Acts 17:6-7, CEB.

Jesus is Lord

Why was Christianity so threatening to the Roman government?

Converts to the faith declared “Jesus is Lord.”

This simple phrase sounds innocent enough to [our] ears; but in the Roman Empire of that time, saying “Jesus is Lord” was both heresy and treason. Under Roman law, Caesar was Lord. Caesar alone [wielded] absolute power and authority.

Persecution

In the government-sponsored persecutions, tens of thousands of believers were executed publicly, often left hanging on crosses along major roadways so that all people would witness the penalty for proclaiming Jesus as Lord. Other believers lost their lives in front of the crowds that packed Roman coliseums located throughout the empire.

Danger of Following Jesus

New Christians courageously refused to bow to the religious or political barriers that denied and defied Jesus’ authority. These Christians accepted the clear and present danger of following Jesus, no matter the consequences to self or family.”⁶

Transition

This is the world in which we find the story of Paul in the scripture for today. “Everywhere Paul journeyed on behalf of Christ, he and the church were in jeopardy and met with resistance at every turn.”⁷

Paul

You remember that, “[a]side from Jesus, no one ... shaped the development of early Christianity more than Paul.” Paul was a devout Jew and, in his early life, joined in these persecutions of the early church. In his own words, Paul once was trying to destroy “the faith.”⁸

Conversion, Mission and Journeys

Then, Paul had a “vision of the risen Christ [which] turned him from being an adversary of Christ’s followers to being an apostle of Christ.”⁹ This powerful experience shaped the rest of his life.

⁶ Mike Slaughter, *Renegade Gospel: The Rebel Jesus* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014), 39.

⁷ Mike Slaughter, *Renegade Gospel*, 40.

⁸ Roetzel, Calvin J. “Paul, the Apostle.” In Volume 4, *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Katharine D. Sakenfield, et al. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.

⁹ Roetzel, Calvin J. “Paul, the Apostle.” In Volume 4, *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, edited by Katharine D. Sakenfield, et al. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.

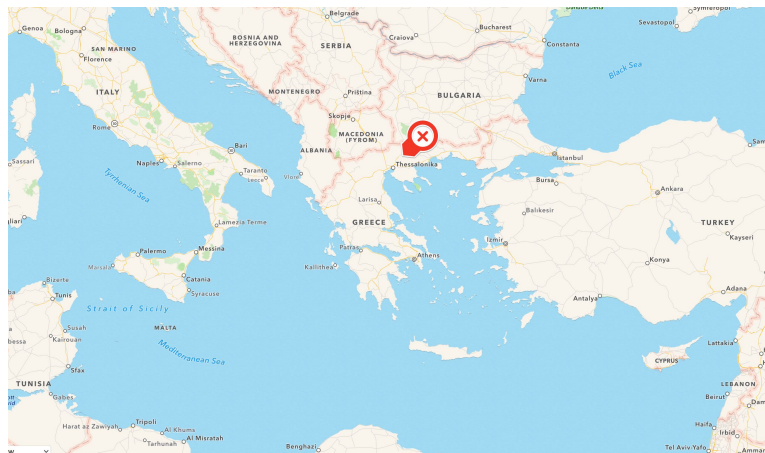
Paul understood his mission from God as being responsible to preach the good news of Jesus Christ to Gentiles, those who were not Jews. This was most of the world's population.

To accomplish this mission, he sets out on three missionary journeys across the empire. He traveled thousands of miles for years starting house churches everywhere he went.

Thessalonica

The scripture text for today find Paul and his traveling companion, Silas, on the second of these missionary journeys. They are in Thessalonica, Greece.

[Show 2015-03-08 Thessalonica Map](#)



Thessalonica is a city in the northeast of Greece on the Mediterranean Sea. On this map, you see modern day Italy on the left, Turkey on the right and the Black Sea on the upper right.

Paul's Visit

This is Paul's first trip to the town and he follows his usual pattern.¹⁰

Paul begins in the synagogue, where he comes for worship three weeks in a row. He teaches those who gather based on the scripture and "demonstrated that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. He declared "This Jesus whom I proclaim to you is the Christ."¹¹

Listen again to how the people respond to the believers who have come to town in Acts 17:6:

¹⁰ Leander E. Keck, ed., *Acts*, vol. X of *The New Interpreter's Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002, 236.

¹¹ Acts 17:3, CEB.

“These people who have been disturbing the peace throughout the empire have come here.”¹²

Transition

What was it about the lifestyle of those early Christians that was disturbing the peace and was so revolutionary?

Revolutionary Lifestyle

There are at least two aspects of the revolutionary aspects of early Christians that can guide our lives today.

Be Loyal to God’s Kingdom
Follow Jesus with Our Actions

Be Loyal to God’s Kingdom

One of the revolutionary aspects of the lifestyle of early Christians was allegiance to God’s kingdom above any other framework for living. Early Christians lived within the framework of the Roman Empire as a political system, which professed Caesar as Lord. It was revolutionary to say that the Kingdom of God took priority over the Roman Empire and Jesus was Lord, not Caesar.

Here in the United States we live within the frameworks of capitalism and democracy. Many people will profess that the desires of the individual carry the most importance. We respect and appreciate the advantages of the country in which we live, our loyalty to the kingdom of God must take priority. Within our world today, it is revolutionary to profess that Jesus is Lord, instead of my own desires being most important.

Follow Jesus with Our Actions

When we say, Jesus is Lord, we must follow him. “Even the demons in Scripture professed Jesus as Lord, but Jesus’ mandate was not simply to believe in him but to follow him. Faith is acting on Jesus’ directive to follow, which means that his lifestyle becomes our lifestyle. Our ... priority are to be based on Christ’s life and teachings.”¹³

This means that we are called to love those whom Christ loved:

- Those who are:¹⁴
 - Poor
 - Brokenhearted
 - Prisoners

¹² Acts 17:6-7, CEB.

¹³ Mike Slaughter, *Renegade Gospel*, 49.

¹⁴ Luke 4:18-19

- Those who are:¹⁵
 - hungry
 - thirsty
 - strangers
 - without clothing
 - sick
 - in prison.

Conclusion

It seems that somewhere along the way, the church has lost our revolutionary lifestyle.

We have stopped causing trouble by placing our loyalty with God's kingdom.
We tend not to disturb the peace with our actions as we follow Jesus.

Call to Action

The time of preparation to celebrate Easter is the perfect time to be honest with yourself about the way you are living in response to the good news of Jesus Christ.

- Is the Kingdom of God my top priority?
- Do my actions indicate that I follow Jesus?
- Do others see something unusual or curious about the way I live?
- Am I willing to cause trouble and disturb the peace because of my faith?
- Is Christ real to me?

Good News

Here is the good news:

When we profess Jesus as Lord, the Holy Spirit which empowers believers for a revolutionary lifestyle, lives in us.

Invitation

Because of God's grace made possible through Jesus Christ, we can be loyal to God's kingdom and follow Jesus with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

When we fall away...

When other things take priority...

When our commitment to Christ is not reflected in our actions...

God is ready to welcome us back.

God is ready to forgive our sins.

God invites us to a revolutionary lifestyle of following Jesus.

Will you pray with me?

¹⁵ Matthew 25:31—46

3rd Sunday in Lent
Renegade Gospel - Revolutionary Lifestyle
First United Methodist Church of El Dorado
Text Online at <http://j.mp/1z73nTO>

March 8, 2015
Acts 17:1-15
Preaching Target Word Count: 1,964
Video is not available online

Closing Prayer

O God, I confess that
I focus all my time and energy on myself;
I ignore the needs of others and turn away from you;
I don't really feel up to the task of living in the way you call me to live.
Forgive me, O God.
Free me for a revolutionary life as part of your kingdom.
Strengthen me to say, Jesus is Lord and back it up the way I live my life.
Fill me with your Spirit for life as a follower of Jesus.
In His name, I pray,
Amen.

	8:30 AM	11:00 AM
Sermon Time		