

Sermon Title: “**Stirring the Pot**”

Series: *Learn, Live, Lead*

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Text: Acts 23:6-11

Introduction



It's crazy how fast things can settle down and pull apart. Like a soup, when refrigerated and left unattended, the ingredients start to separate. When we go to reheat and serve, we will stir the contents in order to merge everything together for optimal experience. In many ways, the Church is like a soup that is prone to pull apart. Because of this, God has given Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists, to stir the Kingdom Pot. ***In our text today***, Roman Authorities moderate a conversation between Paul and the Temple Leadership, with the desire to understand what is at the heart of the issue. Confusion touches everyone as God's Kingdom continues to come into the world, and people must face

and answer the question- just who is Jesus Christ? *As we trust His **leading into** the conversation, we must trust His **work through** it as well.*

I. **Kingdom Spoons** (Ephesians 4:11-16)

*“Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the **apostles**, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. **This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.** Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, **so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.**”*

-Ephesians 4:11-16 NLT

These words are so beautiful, aren't they? *Unity. Love. Growing.* We long for such words to be a description of our local church setting. Yet, do such words define us as a whole? I'll answer this for us- **no; no they don't.** The Spirit brings anointing upon people to keep things moving in this direction, yet to continue moving in this direction means facing against pain and suffering from the inside out.

To be an *Apostle* to Jesus Christ, *one who was sent in His Name*, was not a job people would aspire to. In fact, the original were found to have locked themselves away due to fear of the suffering that would touch them and those they loved. Jesus Himself would appear to them, reaffirm their gifting, and renew their source of strength,

“Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” -[John 20:21-22](#)

This role of an *Apostle* in particular to the gifting Christ gives His bride through His Spirit is meant to stir things up. Stir up relationships, families, religious settings- whole communities are turned upside down with the message of Good News they bring. Despite the good that comes from this, people tend to appreciate things not changing. *Predictability* and *control* are the measure of one’s ability and success in life. This allows us to feed our self-made attitude that we looked at last week from Revelation 2- *a second generation church that lost their first love in Jesus*.

Consider Jesus’ words,

“A kingdom divided by civil war will collapse. Similarly, a family splintered by feuding will fall apart. And if Satan is divided and fights against himself, how can he stand? He would never survive. Let me illustrate this further. Who is powerful enough to enter the house of a strong man and plunder his goods? Only someone even stronger—someone who could tie him up and then plunder his house.” -[Mark 3:24-27](#)

We have an enemy at work in the world around us to pull us apart, like a soup that sits too long undisturbed. Jesus has come to overthrow his kingdom of darkness, dividing and defeating it from the inside out! *As the enemies’ kingdom divides, Christ’s Kingdom unifies and shines forth into this world with Gospel invitation.* Each believer with the Spirit within them is drawn together in the local setting creating the church, a lampstand of Kingdom light for the communities they thrive in. *While this stands to be great news, and though our enemy is defeated, he is still at work laboring to settle churches and see them pull apart, causing their light to diminish.*

Today’s message is a very *needed* message for both the church and the world around us- God is stirring things up to bring the unity of His Kingdom through us into this world. We need fresh *Apostles* sent from Jesus, filled with His Spirit, fearing Him more than man and willing to put everything on the line- including leading their families to this altar- *for the Glory of Jesus Christ!*

“For we speak as messengers approved by God to be entrusted with the Good News. Our purpose is to please God, not people. He alone examines the motives of our hearts.”

-1 Thessalonians 2:4

At the end of this message I’m going to invite you to join me in prayer, along with the growing conviction of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, that we need such Kingdom minded

*Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Such are **Kingdom Spoons**- we need pots stirred for the Glory of Jesus Christ!*

II. Separated Ingredients (Acts 23:6-8)

*“Paul realized that some members of the high council were Sadducees and some were Pharisees, so he shouted, “Brothers, I am a Pharisee, as were my ancestors! And I am on trial because my hope is in the resurrection of the dead!” This divided the council—the Pharisees against the Sadducees—for the Sadducees say there is no resurrection or angels or spirits, but the Pharisees believe in all of these.” **-Acts 23:6-8***

Previously we left off with Rome mediating a gathering between Paul and the Sanhedrin, the *Jerusalem Supreme Court*. It is here Paul was slapped in the face and facing an audience of seventy-one men already determined to see his guilt solved with a swift death. Yet, Paul as an Apostle does not stand before this audience alone, the message he bears brings the company of the Savior who commissioned him.

Recognizing that the ***Sanhedrin*** was divided in their beliefs, Paul affirms the ingredients have pulled apart. *Sadducee* and *Pharisee* had become like oil and water in a religious system that lost its way, helping lead an entire Nation into confusion. In this he appeals to the sect of Pharisee, of which he himself belonged before Christ changed his life. *By doing this, **Paul is being used of Jesus to stir the pot!***

Who were the *Sadducees* and *Pharisees*? They were systems of beliefs within Israel, along with the *Essenes* who sought to understand the Old Testament Scriptures (referred to as the Law) and both teach and lead the Nation to walk with God in efforts to earn His love. **The Sadducees** evolved from the priestly office and served as mediators between Rome and Israel, often giving Rome the priority. *They oversaw the Temple, partnered with Herod, to make it a center for Romanizing and controlling Israel for their invested advantage.* We do not know too much about their beliefs since their group and writings were destroyed by Rome along with Jerusalem in 70 AD. What we do know is here in our New Testament, as well as the response from the Pharisee's whose sect and writings survived. ***In other words, we only know what we know about them from those who hated them!***

The Pharisees were a lay movement that arose to apply the Law along with the oral traditions that helped interpret the Law. They allowed for God to speak through prophets into their lives, were more open to discuss the Bible, and at times embrace a better understanding of what it is saying. This resulted in the Sadducee and Pharisee pulling and leading into two different directions- ideally one closer to Rome and one further away from Rome.

Identifying with the underlying conviction he shared with the Pharisee's, Paul turns the spotlight upon the ***Resurrection***- not necessarily the ***specific act of Jesus*** but the ***general hope of the Law***- eternal life with God! Unlike their Sadducee brothers, the Pharisees recognized the presence of the spirit world- as well as life beyond our death. Why wouldn't the Sadducees believe in this?

When you believe all that you have is in this life, you can lead people to share in pursuing their best life now- *and for them it was partnership with Rome and embracing living life that makes you feel good and happy!* In contrast, the Pharisees understood this life is a shadow of the next, where we face accountability for how we live in this life in response to God revealing Himself to us through the Bible. *The faster they get this right, the faster God's Kingdom will come and they will receive all that they have earned!* While out of the two, the Pharisees sound like the better, *they were still missing the point- Jesus!* They used religion to shackle and enslave the people, capitalizing on fear and ignorance.

“And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.”

-1 Corinthians 15:17-20

When stirred together we see people hungry for more, better, than what life presently is.

Together, this can become a soup that tastes like God's Kingdom. This is the effort Paul is reaching for- to stir things up causing what is dividing to loosen its grip, and what is uniting to strengthen its reach. Like a hand reaching out for that better, greater life- and the Savior's hand gripping them back with ***the power and authority of His Resurrection***, to pull them out of the kingdom of darkness into His Kingdom of Light!

III. A Stirred Pot (Acts 23:9-10)

“So there was a great uproar. Some of the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees jumped up and began to argue forcefully. “We see nothing wrong with him,” they shouted. “Perhaps a spirit or an angel spoke to him.” As the conflict grew more violent, the commander was afraid they would tear Paul apart. So he ordered his soldiers to go and rescue him by force and take him back to the fortress.” -Acts 23:9-10

Yet, before Paul could lead this conversation into the Person and Work of Jesus, the grip on what divides them retaliates back with renewed zeal and the pot itself is spilling over from the intensity of the disagreement. When we realize what is at stake to change, at times the cost is more than we are willing to pay. For the Sadducees Paul's witness meant they were wrong, and this life is not all there is. For the Pharisees Paul's witness meant God is still speaking, all of the Scripture is true, and therefore they would need to face the question of Jesus again!

Sometimes as followers of Jesus, sharing Him through *how we live* or *what we say*, will stir the pot in ways it seems like things are getting worse rather than better. We have to remember, Jesus gets to the heart of the issue- *including the heart of the person*. This is often painful- at times it can be the final straw that breaks down the hardness of their hearts and they run to Him, other times it's a slow chipping away at the heart with little evidence of change. *And sadly, it is adding to the hardness of their hearts- every no to Jesus is no to the life God offers.*

“Don’t imagine that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came not to bring peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. Your enemies will be right in your own household!”
-Matthew 10:34-36

Rome once again steps in and rescues Paul. Lysias is no closer to understanding what is going on than he is resolving the issue itself. This day would end in what seemed a defeat for Paul. Do you ever have days that end like this- a feeling of defeat? Did anything good come from this?

IV. The Hand That Stirs (Acts 23:11)

“That night the Lord appeared to Paul and said, “Be encouraged, Paul. Just as you have been a witness to me here in Jerusalem, you must preach the Good News in Rome as well.”
-Acts 23:11

My friends, we are called to give Jesus our **Yes!** We take all of Him- *all that He did and is doing, all that He taught-* into all the world. We do this together, with His Spirit in us, as we Learn from Jesus, Live like Jesus, and Lead others to Jesus. The results have always been and will continue to be in His hands. *So, pray. Pray. Pray.*

In the darkest moments of the night despair can strike us, leading us into defeat. We began our life in Christ by embracing His work on our behalf; *do not allow life with Him to stop being that.* It is Christ who lives within us and works through us. There will be times when we get this right, and times we get this wrong. Confess, repent, and allow Him to lead you back on track to serve Him.

Jesus Himself comes to Paul with comfort; angels ministered to Him in His loneliest moments in the Garden before the greatest miracle He would become to the world. Jesus knows where Paul is at- physically and emotionally. He Himself meets him there to encourage continued trust in Him.

“Then Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.’ **-Matthew 11:28**

We are not ahead of the Holy Spirit at work stirring the world around us, and He is stirring the hearts of those around us. We are called to shine the spotlight on Jesus as the source of being *uncomfortable* in sin, the ***discomfort of being stirred***, and the light of His invitation to come to Him for the life we all long for and only He can give us. ***Stirring is how things change; it is how we grow. Let us embrace the stirring in our own lives, and through our lives, recognizing it is His hand that stirs!***

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” Then he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ **-John 20:21-22**