

**Theme:** As You Are Going: The Church on Mission (Mt 28:16-20)

**Title:** World Changers- Acts 17:1-15

**Aim:** God changes the world 1 person at a time when we share Christ.

**Intro:** Throughout the history of the world there have been individuals who have been world changers, whose life actions have changed or shaped the world, for good or for ill. Negatively, the world changer who comes to mind is Adolf Hitler, whose rise to power in Nazi Germany, his vision of a perfect race & his desire to conquer all of Europe & essentially all the world, nearly destroyed it. On the positive side, William Wilberforce, a British politician in the late 1700's to early 1800's, worked long & hard for over 20 years to lead the movement to abolish the slave trade & eventually slavery itself in the British colonies. His tireless work, motivated by his faith in Christ, would lead to the abolition of slavery worldwide. Tho there is certainly slavery in the world today, it is illegal & understood to be morally wrong. Others may come to mind as you think about those who are world changers – inventors, discoverers, We see such historic figures as super villains or super heroes & they are/were, but you & I can be world changers as well. Theme: As you are going – the Church on mission. You/I are called to be world changers by spreading the message of the gospel in our world. Acts 17:1-15 [READ] Having been asked by the magistrates & other leaders to leave Philippi, Paul, Silas & Timothy made their way to Thessalonica (map). Thessalonica was about 100 miles from Philippi, about a 3 day walk, according to commentator David Gudzik. That's no fooling around walking! According to Strong's concordance, Thessalonica was a famous & populous city, situated on the Thermaic Gulf. It was the capital of the 2<sup>nd</sup> division of Macedonia & the residence of a Roman governor & questor (one in charge of the public revenue & expenditures). It was in Thessalonica that those who opposed Paul &

the message of the gospel became jealous of the audience Paul garnered & effectiveness of his ministry, as had happened elsewhere. They were angry about the success of the gospel. Essentially their anger was against Jesus. Paul wasn't even present when they dragged his host, one Jason, "before the city authorities" & made this statement: ***"These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also..."*** What was meant as an insult became, in Gudzik's words, "an unintended compliment to the effectiveness of God's work thru Paul & Silas. 'These men have radically impacted our world & nothing seems the same.'" They accused Paul & Silas of "acting against the decrees of Caesar & saying there [was] another king, Jesus." The 1<sup>st</sup> accusation was false, the 2<sup>nd</sup> certainly true, but misunderstood. These Jews raised the fear in the minds of the Thessalonian leaders that their city might become known for their opposition against Caesar & Rome, which would result in Roman soldiers ordered to squash the that opposition. But that was clearly unfounded. Paul & Silas had no desire to overthrow Rome, just as Jesus didn't. Then & now, Christians make (or should) the best citizens, are urged to submit to governing authority & pray for governmental leaders. What was it that made these men – Paul, Silas, & Timothy, world changers? What will make you/me world changers?

1) **Paul & friends did, & we can reason from the Scriptures.** As was his custom wherever he went, Paul went to the synagogue of the Jews. Even tho he was called to be the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts9), Paul had a love for his people, the Jews, & always sought to reach them w/the gospel. Luke records that for 3 Sabbath days, Paul "reasoned w/them from the Scriptures." The word "reason" here means to dialogue w/, to enter into discussion w/. In order to do that Paul needed to know the Scriptures, which he did. After his conversion on the road to Damascus, it was revealed to Paul by God the Holy Spirit that what he had studied all his life up to that point pointed to Jesus. He

had misunderstood Scripture before the Holy Spirit enlightened him, but then when the light was turned on, he began to understand that all of Scripture pointed to Jesus & His being the Messiah & His atoning work accomplishing redemption for all who believe. If we would be a church & individually on mission w/God, if we would be world changers, we must know the Scriptures, which speak of Jesus. Nothing new, but many, even most Christians don't know the Scriptures, because they don't read/study/meditate on Scripture. However, there's an easy fix for that – start reading, studying the Word of God today. Become a Word knower. We need to be like the Bereans. After they were forced out of Thessalonica, not wanting to bring more persecution upon the new believers there, Paul, Silas & Timothy went to Berea, further southwest in Macedonia. And they reasoned w/them from the Scriptures, which was met w/a different response. Luke wrote that “these [Berean] Jews were more noble (minded) than those in Thessalonica; they received the word w/all eagerness, examining the Scripture daily to see if these things were so.” They worked hard at studying the Scriptures, every day. And many believed. If we would be like those Bereans, we will be Word knowers, & be able to reason from the Scriptures. Gudzik: “Those who diligently search the Scriptures consistently (& prayerfully) will find the truth & be transformed by it.” And other lives will be changed as a result. Word knowers are world changers. II) **Paul, Silas & Timothy did, & we can talk about Jesus**. Paul wasn't interested in arguing w/the Jews in Thessalonica about the law or prophets (except as they pointed to Jesus). He didn't want to get into deep & sometimes meaningless doctrinal discussions. He only wanted to proclaim to them that Jesus came from the Father's side, suffered in our place, & rose again; that the Jesus he proclaimed was/is the Christ, the Messiah of God. He simply emphasized who Jesus is. “And some (of those Jews) were persuaded & joined Paul & Silas, as did a great many of he devout

Greeks (God worshippers) & not a few (meaning many) of the leading women” – influencers in the city. Same thing happened in Berea – “Many of them therefore believed, w/not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.” Tho you’ll learn more & more as you study Scripture, you don’t have to be an eloquent orator or a scholarly teacher to be on mission w/God. Just talk about Jesus, who He is & what He has done & how He has changed your world. Just reason from the Scriptures about Jesus & let the Word of God speak for itself about Him. World changers are Christ proclaimers. III) **They did, & we can proclaim Jesus as Lord/King.** That should go w/out saying as we simply proclaim Jesus but it is too often left out & therefore misunderstood. So, it needs to be emphasized here. Those opposing Paul & the others who had “turned the world upside down” were not wrong when they said that they said “there is another king, Jesus.” That was indeed what Paul proclaimed. That message was no threat to the rule of Caesar, tho the Roman Empire would eventually fall under God’s judgment. Jesus is King of another realm, the Kingdom of God, of which all who come to faith in Christ belong. But we often misunderstand or misconstrue the ramifications of that truth. We want Jesus as Savior, we want to be forgiven & have eternal life, but too often we also want to run our own life, go our own way. But if Jesus is our Lord/King, & He is, then, in Gudzik’s words, “He has the right to rule over His people.” If He is Lord/King, then we must surrender our lives to Him, give full allegiance to Him. Our lives are to aligned w/Him, given over to Him, He living His life through us. We are to “put on Christ & follow His lead, as a soldier following his commander. And that will definitely change your world, & the world of those around you, impacted by the change in your life. When you help someone know Jesus as Savior/Lord, you change their world (God does it but uses you in the process). Life direction is changed. Marriages are changed. Abuse, abortion, trafficking,

pornography, all crime, even war & much more are curbed the more people come to faith in Christ. When you lead your child to Christ you change the world in ways you can't imagine. You shape their future & the direction the world is going, one child, one person at a time. We can't win everyone, but by God's grace & work in/thru us, we can win some, which will indeed change the world. It may not be noticeable by the global society, but it will be experienced by those who are won & by those close by. Bro/sis, let us be world changers – know & reason from the Scriptures, talk about Jesus & proclaim Him Lord/King. As we are going, let us be a church on mission.