**January 8, 2017 Introduction to Ephesians Acts 19**

Those of you who were here last January, know that I like to start out the year with a particular theme in mind for the upcoming year. Last year we started off by incorporating a number of lessons on the Apostles Creed for the purpose of helping all of us to understand what we believe about the Christian faith and why we believe it according to what is taught in the Word of God. The Creed if you will recall was intended to help us lay out the most important doctrines found in the Word of God into a short statement or outline.

Some have argued, that the Creed in itself is not Scripture and therefore should not be mentioned from the pulpit nor should it be taught in Christian churches. If you will recall, we have never said nor have ever taught that the Apostles Creed is the equivalence of Scripture but rather it is a short synopsis of what the Bible teaches.

This year I would like us to start out the year by going through the Book of Ephesians. My reasoning in doing so is to remind us of all the blessings we have been gifted with through the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The book is really divided into two sections. The first section lays out the blessings of God and second section tells us how to incorporate those blessings into our lives and into the lives of our families.

I will be the first to tell you that not one of us knows what this New Year has in store for us as a church but I can tell based on what is taught and what we will learn from this Book called Ephesians, is that we are a blessed people. We are blessed on this earth and we are all the more blessed in the heavenlies through Christ to whom every individual who has ever lived will give an accounting for their lives.

So today I would like us to begin with an introduction to this wonderful Book and I would encourage you all to read and re-read this Book over the next several weeks and pay special attention to words, “in Him” and the word “body”.

Turn to Acts 19 where we will find Paul on a missionary journey to a city called “Ephesus.”

1. Ephesus
   1. Artemis or Diana

Artemis was the daughter of Leto and Zeus, and the twin of Apollo. She is the goddess of the wilderness, the hunt and wild animals, and fertility. She is the helpers of midwives as a goddess of birth.

* + 1. In one legend, Artemis was born one day before her brother Apollo. Her mother gave birth to her on the island of Ortygia, then, almost immediately after her birth, she helped her mother to cross the straits over to Delos, where she then delivered Apollo. This was the beginning of her role as guardian of young children and patron of women in childbirth. Being a goddess of contradictions, she was the protectors of women in labor, but it was said that the arrows of Artemis brought them sudden death while giving birth. As was her brother, Apollo, Artemis was a divinity of healing, but also brought and spread diseases such as leprosy, rabies and even gout.
    2. In Ephesus, a principal city of Asia Minor, a great temple was built in her honor, which became one of the “Seven Wonders of the Ancient World”. But at Ephesus she was worshiped mainly as a fertility goddess, and was identified with Cybele the mother goddess of eastern lands.

1. Into this culture the Word of God was introduced
   1. Paul found some disciples
      1. We know nothing of these men
      2. Maybe Jews maybe Gentiles???
   2. Did you receive the Holy Spirit?
      1. I Corinthians 2: 1-13
         1. Mystery
            1. Vs 6-8
            2. Things which we hidden before
            3. To the O.T. writers
            4. To the O.T. saints
            5. To the Jews of Paul’s day
         2. God wanted all men even the Gentiles to be saved
   3. We have only received the baptism of John
      1. That One was coming……prepare for Him!!!
2. Miracles
   1. By the hands of Paul
      1. Handkerchiefs or aprons
         1. Has become a money maker
         2. Just like the selling of idols was for Artemis or Dianna
   2. Why were they being healed?
      1. Offset the claims of Artemis
      2. The false god of Ephesus
   3. Demons cast out (vs 13-17)
      1. Why?
         1. (vs 17b)……the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified
      2. How do we know this?
         1. Changed lives…(vs 18-20)
   4. Why were they changed?
      1. They began to understand
      2. Ephesians 1: 3
         1. If you want your life to be changed
         2. Look at all the blessing of Christ
            1. Compare that to what this world has to offer

Drugs (prescription or non…)

Alcohol…

Sexual promiscuity (goddess of fertility)

Wealth (vs 23-25)

Protection of their god (Islam)

As we start off this New Year of 2017, if we truly want to grow as a Christian we must understand all the spiritual blessing that are ours in Christ Jesus.

Is that what you want this year?

They cannot be acquired with money or effort…but they can be understood through the power of the Holy Spirit, realized by faith in who God is and how He desires for us to have fellowship with Him for His good pleasure.