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Sermon 24 January 2021

Resolved 3: With All Your Heart and Soul

- Good Sunday morning to you all---what a privilege it is to be with you today—we are glad that you have joined us for worship today
- This is the third Sunday in our four-week sermon series called “Resolved.”
- If you’ve been joining us for the past two weeks, you’ll know that we are looking at 4 passages of scripture that have the word “resolved” or “resolve” in English in them, and we are encouraging each other, as members of the body of Christ, collectively and individually, to make 4 resolutions for this new year that Jesus gives to us when he tells us the greatest commandment in Mark chapter 12, verses 28-31
  - First, let’s resolve to love the Lord with all our mind--that addresses the mental component of a person, the intellect, our thinking
  - Second, let’s resolve to love the Lord with all our strength-- that addresses the physical component of a person—that bodily aspect
  - Third, let’s resolve to love the Lord with all our heart and soul--that’s the spiritual aspect of a person
  - And then finally, we said that we would resolve to love our neighbour as ourself—and that addresses the relational aspect of what it means to be a person
- On the first Sunday of this series we took a look in the first chapter of Matthew, where we found the familiar story of Joseph, and we considered how he resolved—how he planned and carefully and thoughtfully considered and reconsidered what he should do

about the fact that Mary was with child—and we heard about the effort he put into planning and how after he had planned and determined his course of action, he went to sleep, and in his sleep the angel of the Lord came to him and enlightened him about the situation and told him what he should do.

- And as we considered those three verses about Joseph we saw that there were three instructions that we could draw from the scripture
  - First, think—think deeply—
  - Secondly we heard: Think, but remember you don't know everything
  - And finally we were reminded to Allow God to have the last word
- And so we resolved to Love the Lord with all our minds.
- Now last Sunday, Pastor Tasha explored with us the story of Daniel and his refusal to eat the food rations that King Nebuchadnezzar provided for him, food that had probably been sacrificed to idols. And she shared how Daniel had “resolved” not to defile himself—even though there were other compromises with the powers-that-be and the culture that Daniel did not object to, when it came to his identity as a member of the people of God, Daniel was set, fixed, determined, resolved. And Pastor Tasha showed us that the Hebrew word that is translated as “resolved” literally means “to set or to place or to assign,” and we saw that even when the power of the throne set or placed or assigned Daniel into the lions’ den, God’s power and authority was demonstrated though Daniel’s faith—even when he was set in--put into-- a situation in which he was powerless, even in danger of being exterminated, in which he had reached the end of his strength, his *me-od*, his muchness—it was then that God was revealed to be with him and then that God transformed the situation. And so Daniel showed us what it means to love the Lord with all our strength.

- Now this week we are going to consider the third resolution—Resolve to love the Lord with all your heart and soul—which addresses the spiritual dimension of a person.
- If we look at Mark’s gospel, there in chapter 12 where Jesus says to love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul in verse 30, the Greek words that Mark uses are *kardia*, for heart, and *psuche*—or *psyche*--for soul.
- You may recall that back in September I preached a whole sermon on the words “kardia” and “psyche” or “psuche,” and it was called “Heart and Soul”—you can find it on the sermons page on the church website
- But these words probably sound pretty familiar to you because there are English words that are related to them—cardiac means “related to the heart” and a “cardiologist” is a heart doctor—and the word psyche is a way in English of talking about a person’s identity—the thoughts that give them their sense of being who they are—and we’re familiar with the words psychology and psychiatrist and psychic.
- Now the word kardia is used hundreds of times in the scriptures, and I don’t think it ever literally refers to the physical organ that sits in your chest and pumps blood, but refers figuratively to that part of a person about which we might say their “heart was hardened,” or their heart was filled with joy or with evil—or that someone is pure in heart—
- And very often the way we use the word “heart” is interchangeable with or very closely related to the word “spirit”—if a person is in poor spirits, they are downhearted—if their spirits are lifted, they are lighthearted—a person can have a broken spirit and a broken heart ---and so when we use the word heart—or kardia in the Greek—we’re in the same vicinity as when we think of “spirit” or the “spiritual”—certainly “create in me a clean heart” is a way of saying we need to get right spiritually

- And this is even more true when we think of the way we use the word “soul”—if we are concerned about someone’s soul, we are concerned about their spiritual well-being—and we might think that they need to give their heart to Jesus—so you can see how heart and soul—*kardia* and *psyche* are related to the spiritual aspect of a person
- One other thing I want to mention is that the word “psyche” comes from the Greek word that means to breathe or to blow—and that’s because the soul—the psyche—is what happens when God breathes the breath or wind of life (the *pneuma* in Greek and *ruach* in Hebrew) into a person—now just hang onto that for a little while because we’ll come back around to it later
- In the book of Acts, Luke tells us that the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and like Jesus in Mark’s gospel, Luke uses those words, *kardia* and *psyche*, to describe all the followers of Christ who had come to faith in Jesus following Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit had descended and filled the apostles, who spoke in languages understandable to all those pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem—and it was those disciples who preached the gospel of repentance and baptism with the Holy Spirit to all those who would listen—and so it’s not surprising that they would be of one heart and soul, because they had been filled with one Spirit—the same spirit—the Holy Ghost who empowered the early church in the book of Acts to proclaim the gospel and live out the kingdom first in Jerusalem and then to the ends of the earth.
- And it’s in the book of Acts that we find today’s scripture. It’s just one verse, in chapter 19. It is 2 sentences long.
- 21 Now after these things had been accomplished, Paul resolved in the Spirit to go through Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go on to Jerusalem. He said, ‘After I have gone there, I must also see Rome.’

- I invite you to get your Bibles out—we are going to be looking at all of Chapter 19.
- Today I'd like for us to take some time to think about the first 12 words in these 2 sentences, because I believe that God has a message for each one of us this morning—something to teach us about what it means to resolve to love God with all your heart and soul—that spiritual aspect of ourselves—those 12 words are these: Now after these things had been accomplished, Paul resolved in the Spirit.
- And so let's begin with that phrase right before that comma—"now when these things had been accomplished. . . ."
- We are in Chapter 19 of the book of Acts, so we're a good ways into it—quite a bit has been accomplished.
- The book of Acts is the second half of what we call Luke-Acts, a two-part work of which the gospel of Luke is the first part. And it's because of Luke-Acts that Luke is the author responsible for writing more of the NT than any other writer—even Paul, who wrote more books, but he didn't write more words—and it's really astonishing that we have any of Luke's writing at all, since of course Luke was a physician, and the idea that a doctor's handwriting could be read and copied and preserved and translated is nothing short of miraculous.
- But Luke tells us in Chapter 1 of Acts that after the crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem, saying in verse 4 and 5: 'This is what you have heard from me; 5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.'
- And of course this is what happens in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, the followers of Jesus who are gathered there are baptised with the Holy Spirit, and they speak to the pilgrims who have come to Jerusalem in their own languages—and some folks think

they're drunk but they are not in fact filled with fermented spirits-- they are filled with the Holy Spirit, who has empowered them with this extraordinary ability to communicate and to bring the prophetic good news of repentance and forgiveness to those who hear.

- Now, by the time we get to chapter 19 of Acts, some 25 years have passed since the crucifixion and resurrection, and the church is growing in multiple countries, thanks in no small part to Paul's first two missionary journeys, and by chapter 19 Paul is on his third missionary journey
- And Luke has told us how on these missionary journeys, Paul, and whoever was with him, would visit a big city, and he'd usually share the gospel with the Jewish believers there, who sometimes accepted the truth that Jesus was the Jewish messiah, but sometimes wouldn't, and then Paul would also share the message of the gospel with the Gentiles—and there is one important point to remember about the way that Paul would talk about Jesus to the Gentiles in cities controlled by the Roman government
- There were many Roman gods (little g) that were worshipped by people in those cities, and they weren't just worshipped, but they were understood to protect the cities they were associated with—and there were folks whose livelihood depended on, for instance, the temple to any particular god—we'll get to that in a bit—
- Now none of these polytheistic Gentiles saw any problem with praying or worshipping or making a sacrifice to one god or another—that was just what you did--and if Paul had suggested that the God of Jesus was just another God that they could add to their pantheon of gods, he might have had a better time of it, and not found himself getting punished or imprisoned quite so often

- But Paul comes into a city and has the audacity to say that the God of Jesus is the one and ONLY God—and some folks have a problem with that
- In chapter 19, Paul has arrived at Ephesus, in what is now modern Turkey, and meets some of what Luke calls “disciples.” There are about 12 of them, and Paul asks these disciples: Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers? And these disciples tell him: no, we don’t reckon so; we’ve never even heard of that—John the Baptist baptised us—and so Paul reminds them—John baptised you into repentance, and John said to believe in the one who came after him—well, that’s Jesus—and so they’re baptised in Jesus’ name and when Paul lays hands on them, they’re filled with the Holy Spirit and Luke tells us that they speak in tongues and they prophesy.
- Like those who were gathered in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, when they are filled with the Holy Spirit, that infilling and empowering is demonstrated in the way they communicate—but not just that—Luke tells us that they prophesied—
- and you may remember that having the gift of prophecy, that being a prophet, does not mean becoming a fortune-teller—doesn’t mean just being able to predict the future—to forecast the weather tomorrow or the outcome of an election or the winner of a horse race—no, prophesying is about speaking with a prophetic voice, being able to speak for God himself and proclaim repentance and forgiveness and punishment or reward—being a prophet is about telling folks what God says they ought to do in order to secure God’s favour, or what they need to stop doing in order to avoid God’s wrath—it’s about letting folks know what God is speaking into their particular situation—again, it’s about letting folks know what God is speaking into their particular situation
- And so these disciples accompany Paul to the local synagogue and for a while they boldly spoke about Jesus, but when some folks there refused to believe and spoke evil of

the Way (that's Luke's word for the gospel), Paul went to a lecture hall and preached there for a couple of years.

- And Luke tells us that Paul did miraculous things there in Ephesus, healing people and casting out demons and converting even those who practiced exorcisms and magic—some of them even burn their books of sorcery that are worth thousands of pounds—and Luke tells us that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.
- And that brings us to verse 21: now after these things had been accomplished, Paul resolved in the Spirit to go through Macedonia and Achaia, and then to go on to Jerusalem. He said, 'After I have gone there, I must also see Rome.'
- Now if Paul wanted to arrive in Rome, why didn't he just go to Rome?
- Because his missionary journey is about the journey—there are things that needed to be accomplished first.
- Now that word that Luke uses for "accomplished," let me just tell you that it means "fulfilled"—in fact it literally means "filled full"—there were things that needed to be filled full before the next step on this journey—all of Asia needed to hear the word of the Lord—and those 12 Ephesian disciples needed to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to be of the same heart and soul, before what happens next.
- Let's move on to the next part of those 12 words. Now after these things had been accomplished, (after they had been filled full)-- Paul resolved in the Spirit
- Now you'll remember that we saw the word "resolved" in English when we looked at Matthew's gospel and we read about how Joseph "resolved" to follow through with his plan to dismiss Mary quietly. And the word Matthew used there that is translated



“resolved” was *enthumeomai* (en-thoo-meh'-om-ahee)—to ponder and think long and hard about something.

- But even though the English word here in Acts is the same—resolved—the Greek word that Luke uses here in Acts is not the same as the Greek word that Matthew uses.
- The word that Luke uses here is actually more like the Hebrew word that Pastor Tasha told us about last week in the book of Daniel—it means to “set”—to put or place or lay or assign—like God set Adam in the garden
- And so that’s easy enough—we all know what “set” means
- But I learned something interesting about the word “set” this past week—did you know that the word “set” has 430 different definitions in the Oxford English dictionary—430 individual meanings. The dictionary entry for “set” is 60,000 words long—60,000 words. That’s like 2 or 3 of my sermons.
- And when you start to think of it, we do use the word “set” in lots of different ways. You can “set” something down; you can set a clock; the sun sets; you can set a poem to music; you can set your mind to do something; you can set-up housekeeping-- but if you’re tricked into it, it might be a set-up; you can set a trap and you can set a table for dinner; you can set an example, you can set something apart or set it aside; a storm can set in when you’re about to set out on a journey so you can set foot in a new land—you get the idea.
- Many of the meanings of “set” can be generally placed into one of two categories—with two opposite meanings—on the one hand, there are ways to use the word “set” that refer to
- things that are fixed or predictable or established, like when you set something down in a certain place, you expect it to stay there—that’s where it is.

- So we may say that something is “set” in stone—unchanging. When we “set” a broken bone we put it together so it doesn’t move; when jelly has “set” it’s not liquid anymore; something may be offered at a “set” price; a person may be “set” in their ways; a young woman who knows exactly who she wants to marry has her cap “set” —
- These are things that are solid or determined or immovable.
- But we also use set to refer to things that are fluid, moving, even coming apart—things that are unpredictable or changing—a captive can be “set” loose; a building or a forest can be “set” on fire; when you leave a place in a boat you “set” sail; you want to be careful around explosives or a person with a bad temper so you don’t “set” them off; a prisoner or a slave can be “set” free; and perhaps most ironically, we speak of things that are “set” in motion
- And so just briefly I want to look at this phrase “Paul resolved in the Spirit,” with the understanding that the Greek word there that is translated “resolved” means “set”—but “set” can mean two very different things
- And it is a testimony to Luke’s skill and ability and inspiration as a writer that his language can communicate multiple layers of meaning and truth
- Now in the Greek, “Paul resolved in the Spirit” is *etheto ho Paulos en to pneumati*
- Now let me just simplify this a little—we can bracket “ho Paulos” because that just means “Paul”—so we’re left with “*etheto*”—that’s the word that is translated “resolved” and we know that means “set;” and then there’s “*en to pneumati*”—and that’s simply “in the Spirit”—you’ll probably recognise the word “*pneuma*” there
- Now if we look at several different versions of the Bible you will notice that some translations don’t capitalise the “S” in “Spirit” there—when it’s capitalised, as it is in the NRSV, we just assume that it’s the Holy Spirit that Luke’s talking about here—but Luke

doesn't put the word "Holy" before that word "*pneumati*," and so some translations say something like "Paul resolved in HIS spirit," while others simply say "Paul resolved, or Paul decided" and they leave out that *en to pneumati* completely—while others say "Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, resolved."

- So what's Luke saying here? Is Paul SET in HIS Spirit, or is he SET in the Holy Spirit—well to tell you the truth I don't think it matters, because we know that Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit, that he was of one heart and soul with the believers, that he would testify I no longer live but Christ lives in me—and so if Luke tells us that Paul was SET in the Spirit, that Paul had determined, that it was settled, that he was resolved about a course of action IN THE SPIRIT, then there's no need to distinguish Paul's spirit and the Holy Spirit, because they're indistinguishable—they were on the same page—Paul was SET in the Spirit—solid, immoveable, unchangeable, determined, resolved.
- But on the other hand, *pneumati* can refer not just to Spirit, but to the wind and the breath, that "*pneuma*" of God in which we live and move and have our being
- And so we could also translate *etheto en to pneumati* as "set in the wind," and surely Paul had seen how his plans and resolutions were never completely set in stone but were always subject to change, subject to the surprising and unexpected movement of the wind of the spirit—Paul might resolve to go to a city and preach the gospel but find himself in prison once he gets there, or be detoured on the way—but Paul never says "things did not work out" or "this is not the way things should be," because even when he winds up shackled or shipwrecked or suffering, he can testify that the Spirit is moving, that the Kingdom is being built, that the gospel is being proclaimed.
- I tried to think of a metaphor that might describe the synergy, the cooperation between Paul's intentions, his resolutions and the fresh, transforming, surprising currents of the

Spirit. I thought of the way a ship's sails are fixed but the wind propels it forward, or the way a kite rides on the breeze—and then I noticed the graphic for this sermon series. It's got paper airplanes on it—and I thought—that's what it's like, because Paul, and each one of us, can choose the design for a paper airplane, we can choose the materials it's made out of, its wingspan and its length, and we can decide what direction to throw it in, and how much force we set it off with—but once it's left our grasp, it's up to the wind how far and how high and how long it flies—the wind can send it crashing to the ground immediately or lift it up to soar indefinitely in any direction it chooses—and so while Paul had set in the Spirit that he was going to Macedonia and Achaia and Jerusalem and Rome, he also set his plans into the wind of the Spirit that would energise and direct his course in unexpected and surprising ways.

- And sure enough, as soon as Paul has resolved to travel on from Ephesus, as soon as he's released that paper airplane from his hand, set it into the wind—the unexpected happens.
- In Ephesus there was a temple to the Goddess named Artemis, and there were artists and sculptors who made their living selling replicas of the temple and other souvenirs that folks would use in their private rituals or just sit on the mantle or the bookshelf like a snowglobe from Largs or a miniature St Colomba's Parish church building—and a silversmith named Demetrius, he got all the other artists all riled up by saying that Paul and these Christians were going put them out of business by telling people that gods made by human hands weren't gods at all—and so these Christians were a threat not just to the economy but to the temple and the goddess too.
- And so these guys get enraged and start shouting "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians." And Luke tells us that a riot breaks out, and the crowd grab Paul's three traveling

companions and drag them into the town theatre—and there’s all kinds of confusion— Luke tells us in verse 32 that “some were shouting one thing, some another. . . and most of them did not know why they had come together” in the first place—they were just angry about something. These rioters don’t even know why they’re rioting.

- That sounds familiar, doesn’t? We’ve been hearing a lot about rioting and desecration of sacred spaces in the news lately. Can you imagine? I think we can picture the scene.
- Now here’s what’s important—in verse 30 Luke tells us that Paul wished to go into the crowd—and if you know anything about Paul’s personality this is not surprising—he is independent, assertive, and sometimes a bit of a hothead—and when Luke tells us that Paul wished to get into the middle of this thing, the word Luke uses is the same word Matthew uses when he tells us that Joseph had “planned” to dismiss Mary quietly— *boulomai* —and you’ll remember that means to intend, to resolutely plan—so this isn’t some whim, some impulse—Paul has thought this out and knows what he wants to do—
- but notice that Luke DOESN’T say that Paul is led by the SPIRIT to go into the theatre, or that he “resolves in the Spirit” to get involved in this thing—no, this is PAUL’S desire and intention—this is HIS idea.
- You can probably imagine what would have happened if Paul had gotten into the middle of that mob. He would probably have raised his voice and said, “that’s right, we DO want to do away with this temple and this idol, there’s no God but the one true God and his son is Jesus the Messiah and you better repent and throw your false gods into the rubbish heap”—it would have been like throwing gasoline on a fire that was already about to get out of hand.
- But what happens? Verse 30 continues: Paul wished (*boulomai*) to go into the crowd, but the disciples would not let him—the disciples would not let him. And who are these

disciples? They're the ones we heard about in the beginning of the chapter, who are filled with the Spirit and given the power to communicate and to prophesy—to effectively let Paul know what the Lord's will is and that he shouldn't get into this confusion. They tell him "don't you get in the middle of all this mess."

- You know sometimes the Spirit speaks to us directly, and sometimes—maybe more often—the Spirit speaks to us through the influence of those godly members of the Body of Christ around us—those with whom we are of the same heart and soul—and even though he is independent and strong-willed, Paul knows when HIS desire and HIS intentions need to be over-ridden by the direction of the Spirit as communicated to him through his fellow disciples.
- And so Paul stays out of it, and the town clerk calms down the rioters by saying "if you've got a problem with these Christians—and they're not temple robbers or blasphemers—then take it to court—bring charges against them and settle this like civilised people—there's no need for all this commotion and confusion."
- Things settle down, and Paul moves on to the next stop on his missionary journey.
- I am reminded of Proverbs 16:9, which tells us: The human mind plans the way, but the Lord directs the steps.
- This morning I hope we can all resolve to love the Lord with all our heart and soul—to be of the same heart and soul with the body of Christ, with the fellowship of believers, to be set in the Spirit, determined, resolute, faithful—but also to set our plans into the wind of the Spirit, who lifts us up, empowers us and directs us in new and surprising and unexpected ways.
- May God bless you this week- we hope to see you soon.