

A. SERMON SLIDES

The Gospel Goes To The Thinkers
Acts 17:16-34

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us

for

“ ‘In him we live and move and have our being’;
as even some of your own poets have said,
“ ‘For we are indeed his offspring.’

Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

B. GROUP DISCUSSION

1. If you decide to study and learn from the text BEFORE the sermon next week, please read Acts 19:23-41 and employ the 4 questions to stimulate conversation:

- a) What stands out?
- b) What questions would I ask of this text?
- c) How could I apply anything from this text to my life?
- d) Where do I see Jesus?

2. If you decide to study the text from the sermon LAST Sunday, please review or read Acts 17:16-34, then proceed to the questions below.

3. The Athenians were looking at a world of Chaos and trying to make sense of it in one of two ways: Mythos or Logos. One way is to create Gods behind the chaos in order to provide order. To try to control the mystical other world behind our world. The other way was to use reason and science. To look for the philosophical or scientific grand principles that would explain the world they witnessed. In what ways are both systems still being used today?

4. Epicureanism and Stoicism. One approached life trying to discover how to experience a world of pleasure without pain. The other approached life with an understanding that avoiding pain was impossible, so the highest goal was to experience contentment. In what ways do you see either at play in the secular world, and the world of religion? Which way most fits the American Dream? Which do we see in commercials?

5. Explain how Paul was able to say that both the "uneducated" Mythos view of life, and the more "reasonable" and intellectual Logos, or Scientific approach to life were both right in aspiration, but both wrong in the target of their worship?

6. How can we cross bridges in evangelizing a world of science or mysticism? A world of hedonism or cold detachment?

7. Paul found out that most people of intellect actually don't want a final answer to the "Argument." Why is it true that even if God could be proven, most people of intellect would still rather not believe?

8. Prayer and praise