



Saturday, 5/16 at 4:00 | Sunday, 5/17 at 9:00

Sixth Sunday of Easter – 2020

**Introduction:** Dear friends in Christ: Today's text is a valuable lesson on how we – *as ones who know Jesus* – should live and speak among people who do not yet know Jesus. May the Holy Spirit help us to learn what Paul did and said, *and then help us to do similar things in our lives!*

Today we are in **Acts 17**. Prior to our text, Paul, Silas, and Timothy proclaimed Christ in Greece; however, *because of persecution*, they all left Thessalonica, then, *because of more persecution*, Paul left Berea to go to Athens. We now continue with Paul, by himself, in Athens Greece...

- Paul Put His Care for Others into Action:** <sup>16</sup> **Now while Paul was waiting for them [Silas and Timothy] at Athens, his spirit was provoked [upset] within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.** <sup>17</sup> **So he reasoned [spoke for the purpose of convincing] in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons [the God-fearing Gentiles], and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. // What did Paul see in Athens? Lenski wrote this description: "Sculpture, Greek architecture, Greek**

theaters, schools of [thinking], [well-educated people] of all kinds, all steeped in Greek [non-Christian religions]" (707-708). Those are the things that upset Paul, *but he didn't get angry*; instead, he reasoned with them about Jesus! *Let us do the same with the people we meet!*

2. **Paul Was Given a Greater Opportunity:** <sup>18</sup> **Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers** [that is, the professional philosophers (followers of Epicurus, 340-272 BC, and Zeno, 336-260 BC, who taught at the Stoa – meaning Porch, thus called Stoics)] **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.** <sup>19</sup> **And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus** [a.k.a. Mars Hill, the meeting place of the council in ancient Athens], **saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?”** <sup>20</sup> **For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.”** <sup>21</sup> **Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.** // Take note of the progression: **(1)** Paul began in the marketplace among the common people, **(2)** then the professional philosophers got involved, and **(3)** then Paul was brought to their official meeting location. They were not persecuting Paul; instead, *they genuinely wanted to hear him speak!*

3. **Paul Preached an Amazing Sermon:** <sup>22</sup> **So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said:**

a. Paul met the people where they were: **“Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious** [devout, committed to various gods]. <sup>23</sup> **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. // Paul's hearers were interested in learning, so, when Paul began to speak, *he drew them close to him by giving them a compliment, "...in every way you are very religious."* When we speak to others, **(1)** let us get to know them, then **(2)** let us begin where they are with God's truth!

- b. Paul began with creation: <sup>24</sup> **The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, <sup>25</sup> nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. <sup>26</sup> 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, <sup>27</sup> 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, <sup>28</sup> 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.'** // When Paul and others spoke to Jews, the Jews already knew about ♦the true God, ♦His work of creation, ♦the reality of sin, and ♦the Promised Messiah. Therefore, *for Jewish audiences*, the focus was on proclaiming Jesus as the risen Christ! However, the Gentiles did NOT possess that basic knowledge **AND** neither do most people today. Therefore, *Paul's message at Athens is a good message for us to use with others in the world today!* In other words, ♦get to know someone, then ♦continue

with God as Creator, then help them to know their very existence is from God, and then explain that they are part of God's grand plan for all mankind!

- c. Paul continued with a call to repent: <sup>29</sup> **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** [God is FAR GREATER than all such things]. <sup>30</sup> **The times of ignorance** [when you lacked the knowledge of God] **God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,** <sup>31</sup> **because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed** [that is, JESUS]; **and of this [God] has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."**
- i. Today, who is being called to repent? **"...all people everywhere,"** without no one being left out!
- ii. What did Paul mean by "repent"? God was calling and empowering them **(1) "to turn to the true God from their idols and their ignorance with an inward change of heart"** (Lenski, 736) and **(2) to trust in the man who is risen from the dead, appointed by God, and coming to judge the world!**

**This Week's Challenge:** As Paul \*put his caring into action, \*seized his God-given opportunities, and \*met people where they were with God's Word, *so let us do those same things beginning today!*

**Let Us Pray:** Dear Holy Spirit, now that we have learned about Paul's work in Athens, encourage us, empower us, and move us to kindly **tell the truth** and **call people to repent!**

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