

The Unknown God - Acts 17:16-34

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[0 : 00] Thank you Heather for teaching our children to worship the Lord and song and declare that which is true.

Thank you church for worshiping the Lord and declaring that which is true and teaching one another in song. Today we have the opportunity, if you're a guest with us today, we've been looking at the book of Acts and so we're going to continue our study in the book of Acts.

We find ourselves in Acts chapter 17 and before I get to the text and as you're turning there, I just, I'm amazed by a pitcher in Major League Baseball.

It is common for people to be switch pitchers, that is they can hit with both the right and left hand, but this is the first switch pitcher. He can throw equally with his left and with his right.

If I were to throw with my off hand, it would be a very obvious which is my off hand, but not so with Pat Vendetti.

[1 : 07] Why I show you that is he is a true ambidextrous person. He equally with his right or left can use it and it's quite amazing to see him throw a fastball equal with right or left.

He's ambidextrous and today we're going to look at Paul, the apostle Paul and I would call him the ambidextrous evangelist. With different audiences, he can use a different method in proclaiming the gospel.

Today we will see him go to three different audiences. So what will be the text today? We're going to see Paul sees something and because of what Paul sees, he's going to feel something.

And because of what Paul sees and feels as a result of seeing something, he's going to go somewhere. And when he goes somewhere, he's going to go to three different locations. After he goes to three different locations, he's going to say some things.

And that's what we're going to look at is what did Paul see? What did Paul feel? Where did he go? And what did he say? And he appeals and he uses different methods of sharing the gospel depending upon the audience.

[2 : 18] And he's an ambidextrous evangelist and I would encourage us to learn from Paul today. Before we get there, I want to share where Paul went.

We picked him up in Philippi where he was imprisoned and beaten. He left to Berea that was last week and then leaving under duress. He was he left to go to Athens and he leaves Silas and Timothy up in Berea.

And so I want us to imagine in our minds, he is now down south in the southern Greece, modern day Greece, at this town called Athens. And before we get to our text, I just want to say a few things about Athens.

Athens, when Paul arrived in Athens, it was in its afternoon of glory. It had already had its big heyday of glory where it was the center of commerce and politics and intellectual stuff and cultural things.

Now economically and politically Corinth is the center and at least Athens just claiming an intellectual center and a cultural center.

[3 : 30] Athens though still enjoyed its heritage. It had the father of tragedy. That is the playwrights. It had the great historian Herodotus and it had the father of Western medicine.

It could claim the father of Western philosophy of Socrates and Plato and Aristotle. They all frequented Athens. They had so much going for them and yet we will see in our text that they had many idols.

Paul is going to see these many idols and some speculate when Paul visited Athens, the population was somewhere around 10,000 people, but they would say there's 30,000 idols.

Idols eclipsed the population 3 to 1. You would be more easy to find an idol than you would find a person in the city of Athens. Temples were constructed all throughout town. Even today you have the Acropolis and the goddess of Athena. That was the temple of the goddess of Athena. It was a beautiful town. As we read the text, would we imagine entering this city with Paul?

[4 : 45] I've asked Melissa to read our text this morning and so would we listen to the word of God before we proclaim? Go ahead. Follow along with me, chapter 17, verse 16.

I don't know how to do this. I can't stand there like that. No. Actually, let me just read. Follow along with me, Acts, chapter 17, 16 through 21. Now while Paul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw the things in 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 and those who happened to be there. Some of the Epicureans and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him and said, what does this babbler wish to say? Others said he seems to be a preacher of foreign deities because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. And they took him and brought him to the Aropagus saying, may we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?

[6 : 08] For you bring some strange things to our ears and 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 and hearing something new.

We first notice what Paul saw. What did Paul see? In verse 16 we see that Paul saw that the city was full of idols.

I already mentioned that the idols outnumbered the people three to one. But Paul saw through a biblical worldview and what do I mean when I say he saw through a biblical worldview?

His worldview is a set of beliefs about the most fundamental issues of life. And if you were to ask, if you go throughout town and you quarry people, you take a survey and you say, where did we all come from?

You would hear different answers. What is the meaning of life and what does it mean to be human? You would receive different answers. What is right? What is moral?

[7 : 20] What is right and wrong? And who determines that? You would hear different answers. And the last question you could ask is where is this all going? Where is history leading?

You would hear different answers to that. And your answers to that form and shape what I call one's worldview. It is a comprehensive understanding of the answers of origin, meaning, morality, and destiny.

One's worldview allows one to look at answers through the questions of the grand narrative. Christians enjoy many of the same things that those outside of Jesus enjoy, but their understanding of them in the lens that they use is different.

Let me share just a few of them. Our understanding of morality is different. Our understanding of the role of government is different. Our understanding of war is different.

We see art differently. We understand things that are what we would say are beautiful, are different. We listen to music differently. We watch sports differently. We view the purpose of business differently.

[8 : 28] We view ethnicities differently. We view nature differently. We view the poor, the foreigner, the widow, the unborn, the marginalized, the vulnerable.

We see them differently. We view sex, maleness, and female-ness differently. We view marriage differently. We view food and drink differently. We view death differently. We view work differently and the very purpose of life differently.

This helps us understand when Paul went into the city and he saw all of these idols, it instantly informs him there's a different worldview at play.

And he meets some people down in verse 18. We see that he meets Epicurean philosophers and Stoic philosophers. The Epicurean ethic, we could say this, is that they promoted that which was pleasurable and tranquility.

They were atheists and or pantheists, but the gods were far removed and they did not exact any influence in world affairs. That's what your Epicurean would have said. Your Stoic philosophers, they had the ethic of reason and they were self-sufficient and obedient to the dictates of duty.

[9 : 40] And they were pantheists. Due to these worldviews and their religions, along with other Roman deities, there were idols everywhere. And as previously mentioned, the city that he saw that the city was full of idols were told in verse 16.

Paul's response to what he witnessed should make us long to see our neighbors and nations replace their idolatry with the worship of the living God.

And that's what motivates Paul as well. We also live in a land of idols. And idol is anything that we, in which we turn to when we need something only Jesus can provide, is one way to describe an idol.

So idols are not just statues or worshiped as shrines. They are substitute gods and functional saviors that supplant the only true and living God in the human heart.

Idols can take on the form of the need of pure approval or the pursuit of success or the pursuit of money, the drive for pleasure in food, this all-consuming allegiance to a sports team or an obsession with a famous personality, or the pursuit of education, and on and on we could go.

[10 : 59] Church, we bear the responsibility of destroying such idols in our lives and then lovingly pointing them out to our culture so that others may understand that which is true.

The pursuit of idols won't satisfy the human heart. Psalm chapter 16 verse 4 reads this, Troubles multiply for those who chase after other gods.

And so as Paul saw all of these idols and that they're only going to amount to more trouble for the people, he had a response to this.

Read with me in verse 16, as he saw that full of idols, he says, his spirit was provoked within him.

So we know what Paul saw, but now what did Paul feel? Paul felt provoked.

And yes, the definition of provoked, this can say he was deeply distressed. Some of your translations indicate yes, include anger.

[12 : 02] He was infuriated, if you will, at idolatry, yet Paul also was motivated by love. So he was provoked at the idolatry, but also motivated by love for the people.

And in this he has the heart of God. Look at me with Paul's tone and demeanor at what he displays. In verse 17 it says, for Paul reasoned with the people.

If Paul's provokedness, he was just anger, he wouldn't have reasoned, he would just would have yelled. And so please understand this provoked nature is a hatred for idolatry, but a love for the people.

And so it brings him to reason. Rather than allowing his feelings to lead him to an angrily take a sledgehammer to the idols, he had holy love and he engaged the people.

He listened, he heard them, he dialogued, he debated with them. And in verse 22 it says he spoke to the people very respectfully because he says, Men of Athens, I perceive that you in every way you are a very religious people.

[13 : 11] The lesson for us as Christians that when we are provoked and please know all the things that take place in the news and the things I hear about from Christians, I would say we get irritated and provoked.

But I would ask us to not just be provoked into anger. It's okay to be angry with sin, but also include a love for humanity and let your response be that way.

Let us learn from the Apostle Paul. It is not a spiritual gift just to tell it like it is. And evangelism loves or involves the state of one's heart.

If your life doesn't reflect both sweetness and thunder, you are either a coward or obnoxious when it comes to sharing your faith. Sin ought to provoke you, love ought to motivate you.

Some are good at ministering truth, but terrible at the ministry of tears. Some are good at telling the truth that they need to change, but are not willing to connect with them and love them to Christ.

[14 : 22] How are we at being effective evangelists? Paul was committed to truth. Paul had a compassion for people. I love the Psalmist who says, May God be gracious to us and bless us.

May he make his face shine upon us so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.

Let the peoples praise you, O God. Let all the peoples praise you. Let the nations rejoice and shout for joy for you judge the peoples with fairness. You lead the nations on the earth, say, Let the peoples praise you, O God.

Let all the peoples praise you is your heart for those whom you are provoked to have them one day be a people who praise the Lord.

I pray it be so, like the Psalmist. Do you long to see people in Spokane, your colleagues, your neighbors, your family, your friends sing for joy to the Creator and the Redeemer?

[15 : 35] If not, then cultivate your feelings by meditating on the cross of Christ. Why? What do we see at the cross of Christ? There at the cross, we can see God's absolute commitment to His perfect holiness and hatred for sin.

And we can also see the unfathomable compassion for sinners. I appeal to you to consider the cross.

The more we think about the cross, in fact, the more we will grow in truthfulness and in tears, in holiness and in love. Paul saw the idols and Paul felt provoked.

But where did Paul go? So we see what Paul saw. We see what Paul felt. Where did Paul go? He went to three places, two willingly and perhaps one questionably unwillingly.

This is where we see the flexibility of Paul, the range of evangelism, this ambidextrous evangelist that we referred to earlier.

[16 : 46] We should both admire and imitate Paul's flexibility and range of evangelism. Spokane is filled with a range of spiritual diversity. Some have no knowledge of the Bible in Jesus and others are culturally Christian, familiar with the Bible, try to live moral but are not believers.

Let me share with you 26 or something years when I was at Washington State University. I was there and there was a man from Spokane, another student who was there from Spokane and I was just out taking surveys, seeing, sharing Christ with individuals.

And I came upon a young man and I asked him, I said, Sir, can you explain to me your understanding of Jesus? And so I was just trying to engage in a conversation with him.

And he said, this was his answer. Besides being a swear word, nothing. So I pressed him a little bit and truly that was the extent of his knowledge of Jesus. Secondly, I thought, well, I'm going to try to maybe approach this differently.

So I thought, well, I'm going to ask him about Christians, what his estimation of Christians are, who they are, because we're followers of Christ. So if you don't know anything about Jesus, maybe you can have some relation to what Christian is. So I asked him, I said, well, then could you share with me what your understanding of a Christian is?

[17 : 58] And he said, besides being a bigot, nothing. That was his understanding. And as we left that conversation, I'm saddened for this man.

He's going to spend an eternity apart from Christ if nothing changes. And I pray that our hearts would understand all around us, people vary from their different spiritual understandings and backgrounds.

America is a post-Christian nation. We're not too far behind Europe and quickly catching up. Don't assume people know about Christ or are familiar with Jesus.

So the first place Paul goes is the synagogue. Look with me in verse 17. He reasoned at the synagogue. He would always go to the synagogue first if there was one in town.

And he says they were the Jews and the other people who were devout. There were people committed to the Old Testament. So Paul was talking to those who were familiar with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

[19 : 10] And so he was proving Christ to them as the long awaited for Messiah. And so he was ministering to religious people. This is what Paul was doing.

They were religious, but they were not Christians. You may work with them. You may have them in your family. Very religious people who may be tacitly familiar with the Bible.

Every Sunday I recognize that there may be some in here who are religious people, but they do not know Christ. People with the church background who grew up in the church, maybe even perhaps were baptized, but have never personally believed in Jesus and his sinless life, his death for sin and his resurrection from the grave.

For those religious people, you can appeal to Christ immediately and quickly and proclaim the gospel. But notice Paul went to a second location.

In second location, also there in verse 17, he went to the synagogue. And in the marketplace every day for those who happened to be there.

[20 : 18] So he went to the marketplace. This was the center or the hub of Athenian culture. There was nothing like it. It was a place of commerce and public dialogue. It was called the Agora and the Greek.

There was nothing really like it in America or in our Western understanding. It was a place where town officials would go to deliberate, to deliberate. It was a place where artists would go to create, where business people were doing business.

It was where media people were reporting, philosophers were philosophizing. Everything happened at the Agora, at the marketplace. And into this busy public venue, Paul takes his faith in Christ there every day and proclaimed the gospel.

Christianity is a public faith. It is not a private faith. Paul lives out his faith and communicates it every day in the public arena.

Paul didn't mean to start a riot. He meant to start a conversation. And you don't have to be familiar with the Socratic method of teaching to understand the importance of asking and using questions to engage people in the marketplace.

[21 : 27] As I did with this young man. Tell me your knowledge of Jesus. Tell me what your understanding of Christianity is. Today I'll just try to highlight the value and the importance of asking thoughtful questions.

To engage people in a conversation. Recently, this last week, because of the leak from the Supreme Court, Roe v. Wade is in the news.

And it is a part of public dialogue. Everyone is talking about it. In the business, in the marketplace, friends, family, everyone is talking. So, coincidentally, I had a conversation with a lady and she was a pro-women's choice.

And so I asked her. I said, ma'am, she's a friend of mine. I said, I think we're having the wrong conversation.

I said, we're talking about a symptom of what we may each believe. Can I go a step lower and may I ask you this question?

[22 : 35] What are the presuppositions that would believe someone to believe in your camp and what you believe? It's a right for a woman to make choices and do it with her own body as she chooses.

What are some underlying presuppositions? And as we were talking, guess where we ended up? We were talking about God. Because here's what I said.

So she gave me her answer. And I said, because I don't have a right to do with my body as I please. I don't have a right to look at whatever I please. I don't have a right to put into my ears whatever I please.

I don't have a right to lay with anyone whom I please. I have no rights over my body. It's not my own because I believe God exists. And he's laid down things for my life for my good and for the benefit of others.

And so there's some restrictions on my life. So all of a sudden we were talking about God, but we can't talk about the symptoms. In some ways that's the wrong conversation.

[23 : 38] So ask what are the underlying presuppositions? And you can find yourself in a conversations and talking about things at a more meaningful level and share Christ in that way.

That was not the point of my conversation, but that's okay. The third, so he's in the marketplace. Now notice where these intellectuals thought of him.

He says, what does this babbler wish to say? This tells you the use of babbler, how the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers thought of what Paul was saying.

Intellectuals, they refer to him as a babbler. Babblers literally means a seed picker. It was a pejorative term of one who lacks sophistication, that there's an unsystematic way of gathering information to drive it an idea or concept.

And so it was like a bird randomly picking up seeds. So he was called a babbler, just a seed picker, someone who came up with all of these ideas. So think what this must sound like to them, the Epicureans, who had no knowledge of God.

[24 : 46] It's the first time the Gospel went here. Think how crazy this would seem that God came down in human flesh and took on human flesh. He lived a sinless life to die and offer himself up as an acceptable sacrifice to the Father, to forgive sin.

And three days later, he rose from the grave. To people who have no knowledge of God, to people who have no knowledge of the Bible, to people who have no knowledge of the Old Testament. He is just like picking up a thought here and a thought there, and you are nothing more than a babbler. That's a seed picker. And that's what they thought Paul.

But then they lead him to the third and final location. And that's the Aropagus, verse 19. So there was enough interest in what he was saying that they took him to the Aropagus.

Now, you understand why they took him there, because verse 21 says, And all the Athenians and what the foreigners who lived there spent their time in nothing except telling and hearing something new. So while they didn't understand it, and they thought it was totally incoherent, just a smattering of ideas here and here, they were like, at least we're intrigued, it's new, so let's go to the Aropagus and hear him out.

[26 : 03] So they did. And the Aropagus was the hill of Aries. It was a temple with the God of war there at the top. And it was also commonly called Mars Hill.

And it was a place where speakers were permitted to speak freely and listeners sat to listen. There was also a council of the Aropagus who met there, whose function, among other things, was to include overseeing and supervising education and controlling visiting lecturers.

The citizens of Athens, like America, love new things. They like new ideas, but they needed new life. People today watch the daily news to hear what's new, new music, new movies, new clothing, new discoveries, and then enjoying something new is not necessarily wrong.

The problem is, however, that some things are unchanging. The Gospel is an unchanging old message. It cannot be edited.

It cannot be expanded, nor updated. And before we get to Paul's speech, I want us to observe two things.

[27 : 17] First, D.A. Carson notes that speeches at the Aropagus had a reputation for lasting two or three hours. And so some of you thought our services were long. I should hear a little more thank yous.

But we don't have his entire speech in what we're about to read, but we have a thumbnail sketch. And you'll notice in his speech that Paul knows his audience.

Not one time does Paul quote an Old Testament scripture in his speech as recorded. He is speaking to people who do not know the Old Testament or God.

They don't know the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So he appeals to creation, general revelation, and Paul beautifully puts the Gospel in the bigger picture story of the Bible, just like what our kids did this morning.

And so he is going to show the reasonableness of the faith and exclusivity of the faith, the necessity for repentance, and then the necessity of placing their faith in a Redeemer. And so now if you would look and read with me the rest of our texts together, this is what Paul said.

[28 : 28] And so, verse 22, Paul standing in the midst of the Aropagus said, Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed and I observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with the inscription to the unknown God.

What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. But God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord in heaven of 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 the one man, every nation of mankind to live on the earth, face the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.

That they have, that they should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him, yet he is actually not far off from each of one of us. For in him we live and move and have our very 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 and images formed by the art of imagination. The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now we command all people everywhere to repent.

[29 : 56] Because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the earth and his righteousness by a man whom he has appointed. And of this he has given to all by raising him from the dead.

Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked and others said, we will hear you again about this. So Paul went out from their midst, but some of them joined him and believed, among whom are Dionysius, the Arapagite, and the women named Amoris and others with him. So now we see what Paul said. We know what he saw, we know what he felt, we know where he went. Now he's at the Arapagus and now he is speaking to the intellectual community who has never heard about God, is totally ignorant of the Old Testament and he presents the gospel to them

and what does he communicate?

First he finds common ground, he commends them and he says, you know what I, so as we listen to this and watch what Paul does, let us take note of this in our heart and mind.

What does he do? He says, you're very religious people, we have that in common. I too am religious. Solomon wrote that God has said eternity in the human heart. Everyone is religious.

[31 : 14] The answer to eternity is hardwired to worship. The question is what will be the object of one's worship? Paul then states the point of conflict, but I saw a temple or an inscription to an unknown God.

What therefore you worship as unknown? It is this God I proclaim to you. In other words, the true and only God that is unknown to you, and God who gives as a possibility, it is who that is the God, that is who I want to talk to you about.

So he then goes on and he mentions that God is a creator. Paul begins his address with creation. Look with me in verse 24.

And God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord in heaven of earth, does not live in temples made by man. Paul begins with creation, asserting that God had made the world and everything in it.

Regarding the Stoics, Paul states that God is distinct from creation. That would have been at odds with the Stoics. With the Epicureans, Paul states that God is not a loaf, but he is involved in creation.

[32 : 22] That would have been appalling to the Epicureans. And later, Paul, writing to the Romans, he says his invisible attributes, namely his eternal power and his divine nature, have been clearly perceived since the creation of the world and the things that have been made.

So all humanity is without excuse. Paul knows that he can refer to creation and declare what is true about God. God is a creator.

The whole earth Paul is communicating is a theater of God's self-revelation. Look at his divine attributes. His divine nature and his eternal power.

A persecuted and imprisoned pastor once told his tormentors regarding his congregation and his church. This is in World War II.

He says, you can throw all of us in prison and kill any of us if you like and tear down our buildings, but you cannot tear down the stars. Day and night they pour forth speech.

[33 : 33] I'm sure we all have noticed the ubiquitous stamp made in China. It's everywhere, made in China. The reality is everything in the world of God's creation is similarly stamped with the undeniable truth that God is the creator who formed it.

God's stamp on creation is also ubiquitous. It's everywhere. The psalmist declares how countless are your works, O Lord, and in wisdom you have made them all.

The earth is full of your creatures. Thirdly, Paul writes that God is the sustainer of life. Look with me into verse 25, nor has he served by human hands.

That's all he needs anything since he himself gives all to humankind, life and breath and everything. God is the sustainer of life. Paul here is arguing that God cannot be, is not only created the world, he sustains the world.

If Jesus does not hold everything together, everything would fall apart. God is distinct from creation, yet is intimately involved in sustaining it at every moment. The implications are clear.

[34 : 43] God doesn't need people. We need him. Look what he says. He is not served by human hands. It's not we can give anything to God. Oh, God needs oxygen. Let's make sure we get an oxygen tank on God.

I think he's hungry. Let's make sure we feed him. God does not need anything. And yet we are dependent upon him. Look what Paul is saying since he himself gives to mankind life and breath and everything.

We can't give him anything, but he sustains all of life. And he's telling these intellectuals, this is who God is and you know it and it's because it's clear in creation.

God feeds us with his creation. God sustains us with the air that we breathe.

And what comfort does this, what hope does this bring to us? God is the self-sufficient one. He needs nothing.

[35 : 43] And when he calls you and I to a task, he has every resource available to accomplish the task that you have set in front of you. Do you need to reconcile a relationship?

He has every resource for you to accomplish that task. What job has he called you to? He's given you every resource. He has it in himself to give you that.

That's the hope of God being a sustainer of life. God is also the ruler of nations. This is the next point. God is the ruler of the next point.

Paul communicates that God's independence does not mean disengagement. Humanity is the pinnacle of his creation. God in fact created different ethnic groups from one man, he declares. This means that the diversity of human, within the human family is by God's design. And he delighted to see the increasing of peoples of different ethnicities.

[36 : 43] Thirdly, he is communicating that God is knowable. Look with me in verse 27. They should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him, yet he's actually not far off from each one of us in verse 27.

God is knowable. Follow Paul's argument. Paul is arguing that the purpose of creating humans of all these different ethnicities is that they should seek God. That's the purpose.

God is lovingly desired as people to discover their Creator. God is not detached, disinterested or unengaged. He is near to us, but we need the work of Jesus to know him.

And last, in verse 28, we see that God is the father of humanity. For in him we live and move and have our very being and on in verse 28 and 29.

Paul here in verse 28, he is quoting two pagan poets, familiar to the Athenians. He first quotes epitomenities. I wish they had easier names than that.

[37 : 48] What about Bob or Scott or something like that? And he quotes a second Stoic author whose name is Eratus, who wrote of man's creation being in the image of God.

Here's the point. Have you ever done or said anything that left you commenting, I sounded just like my father. I sounded just like my mother. If so, you know firsthand that people tend to resemble their parents.

Paul is arguing something similar here. Those who are made in his image bear the image, the similarities to God. It doesn't mean that you're God. It means that you can think, act, feel, choose, love, work as God does.

Paul is arguing the essential that your poets understand the intimate relationship between God and man. Why don't you see it so clearly? That's what he's communicating to these intellectuals.

Church, we live in an era in America that is post-Christian. Increasingly so here in Spokane. I mentioned the man I met when I was in college.

[38 : 57] And that line of thinking of individuals I come into contact with who know nothing of the Lord Jesus are more common and more common. Nothing about the Bible.

Simply telling someone, Jesus loves you and died for you. So make him Lord of your life to forgive, to be forgiven of your sins is confusing and alienating.

It's the truth. It's the gospel. But that may be to a person who has never heard the gospel, never read the Bible, doesn't have any category for what we're talking about. That may be confusing and alienating to those who can't even define sin, who don't understand who Jesus is and what his death has to do with anything.

In the past, western Christians communicating the gospel to next door neighbors assumed people basically shared our world view. And let me explain. We assumed that they had an understanding of God.

We assumed that they had heard of Jesus. We assumed that they knew he died on the cross and rose for the benefit of humanity. We assumed that they viewed sin as offensive to God and the destruction of people.

[40 : 10] We assumed that they viewed history was moving somewhere. In days gone by, even atheists were Christian atheists. And here's what I mean by that.

When they denied God, the existence of God, they were denying their understanding of a Christian God. Not so anymore. But the time for making these assumptions and evangelism has passed.

In order to be effective, we have to begin sharing the gospel and anchoring our teaching in a creation account. Paul goes back to creation to tell these intellectuals about God who they have no knowledge of and what Jesus has done.

Paul is this ambidextrous evangelist when it comes to the marketplace and sharing the gospel beginning at creation. You can do this too.

I've shared with you in the past that when we were ministering in China, we would have those in China read the first 11 chapters of Genesis. Because there you understand that in the beginning God exists and He created all things perfectly.

[41 : 20] Man fell and boy did they fall. Noah and the flood, not going to do that again, but then man reverts back to sinning, building the Tower of Babel through chapter 11.

That there's no hope for man's pervasive sinfulness, which prepares them to receive the gospel when you get to, and then we would turn to the gospels and read about Jesus, who has this cure for this pervasive sinfulness in humanity.

That prepared them to hear the gospel. Last, and we will conclude, God is both the judge and the rescuer.

If I had thought one of Paul's finer lines in the entire dialogue, I would take verse 30 as the finest line. In times of ignorance, God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent.

Look what Paul has done. He is saying, listen, God is a creator. He is a sustainer of life. He is a ruler of nations. He is knowable.

[42 : 26] He is Father of humanity. He is judge and the rescuer. So repent. And so he says, in times past, it says that in times of ignorance, God overlooked.

What is Paul communicating here when he uses the word overlooked in times of ignorance, God overlooked. Paul is not communicating that God ignored human rebellion.

Paul is communicating in God's great mercy. He didn't immediately visit humanity with his deserving judgment. So he overlooked in times past.

He didn't come down with judging sin immediately. So respond, repent. So now he commands all people everywhere, repent.

And then he tells them why, because there is a fixed day that he will judge the world in righteousness by a man that's Jesus, and whom he, the Father, has appointed.

[43 : 33] And of this, he, the Father, has given assurance to all by raising him, the Son, from the dead. Again, this is just a thumbnail sketch of the speech that Paul would have given the sermon.

And so he says, repent, for God is coming and he is going to judge, but he is also the rescuer, because they heard of the resurrection, overcoming sin and death, because they know that, because in verse 32 he says, and now when he heard the resurrection, some mocked, and others said, we will hear this out again.

There's two responses, and the third one is, some, in verse 34, believed. And we have two of their names, Dionysius the Aropagite, which means he was part of the council at the Aropagus.

He was one of the intellectuals sitting there, and this woman named Amoris, and others along with her.

So here's what I have some questions and application for us today. As you walk throughout Spokane, as you go to work, what do you see?

[44 : 48] Paul saw idols. I see hurting people. I see people who are deceived by lies, and it's hurting them.

The lies they are believing and they're acting on, it's hurting them. That's what I see. What do you see? And then what do you feel about that?

And do you have in equal measure a love for the people that you have a hatred for the sin that you may see? Paul did.

And where is that going to take you? Paul went to three places, synagogue, marketplace, the Aropagus. Paul went, where are you going because of your motivation of love?

Your detesting of sin? Your compassion for people? Where is it going to take you, or who are you going to invite into your home? What are you going to do about it?

[45 : 53] And then lastly, what are you going to say? Paul had a sermon, but he approached the synagogue differently than he did the marketplace than he did the synagogue.

The message of the gospel stays the same. His method changed. He was an amazing, ambidextrous evangelist. And I pray that we would grow and our ability to communicate the gospel with a dip, that truth is unchanging.

It's the only thing that can save, but our method may. Let's pray. God help us to consider your word. And the truth contained therein. May our hearts burn for your truth. Father, draw us outside of ourselves and be very selfless and be committed and holy to you.

May our grief over the idolatry that is all around us and may be even within us, move us to speak and live the gospel so that others may come to know you as Lord.

[47 : 06] May we be bold in our presentation of the gospel and wise into knowing how. We love you, Lord. Amen.