

24th Sunday after Trinity 2024

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Preacher: Rev. Daniel Avitan

[0 : 00] Father in heaven, firstly we pray for the children of this church, those that are in Messiah Kids and those that are in the service, Lord, we pray a blessing upon them, that they would know your love towards them, Lord, and that it would so move them by your spirit, that they would always know, never having a memory of not knowing, your love towards them.

We pray also for the leaders and the helpers in kids' ministry, and Lord, as we open up your word and look at the Apostle Paul in Athens, Lord, help us to be brave people, people that would, by your Holy Spirit, ask difficult questions about our own allegiances, about the idolatry in our own lives, not so that we would remain in shame, but that we would be liberated.

For freedom, you have set us free, that we would know that in a truer, deeper sense afresh this morning. We pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen. If you don't have one of these scripture journals, feel free to grab one. Yep, there's still a pile at the back welcome table.

They're our gift to you. We like these because you can flip to the sermon text, and there's a bunch of lines on the other side that you can take notes. It's a way that we pray that you'll dive deeper into God's word.

And if you are following along in one of these scripture journals, we're on page 102. Now, Josiah read just starting from verse 22, but we'll be in verses 16 to the end of the chapter.

[1 : 38] But before I get into that, a bit of a story. So in the fall of 2015, a very close friend of mine who worked on Parliament Hill helped out a local conservative candidate that was seeking to be an MP.

So if you remember, I think it was the end of the summer or the beginning of the fall, the writ dropped, the election cycle kicked into gear, and all of these lovely, loyal staffers were encouraged to give up weeks of their time without pay to candidate for, to canvas for a candidate that they may or may not have believed in.

It was an interesting thing. I never participated in any of this, but I had a good friend that did. So by the time the election was called, my friend was fairly tired of politics. He did not really have anything going on afterwards, so he decided to canvas for this MP, or at least this candidate that was trying to be an MP.

Job was to door knock. Go around day in, day out, knocking on doors. Strangers. Pamphlet encouraging them to consider voting for this specific person.

Here's the problem. The riding was Ottawa Vanier. Now if you've lived in Ottawa for any amount of time, Ottawa Vanier is like the reddest of red ridings in all of Canada.

[3 : 03] It's been around since the 30s. It has never not voted Liberal, and the big chunk of it that existed before voted Liberal from like the 1880s. It's a liberal, it's like as strong as it can be.

But my friend is canvassing. Politically, this person's not there, doesn't really believe in the candidate, doesn't really believe in the platform, nevertheless is going around knocking on doors. Having more doors literally slammed in his face than invited in. It was a terrible experience, one that we've laughed about since.

The ground wasn't exactly fertile for a blue flower to bloom. Not only that, but my friend lacked this passion and belief needed to endure multiple weeks of such canvassing.

Hard soil, no zeal. Hard soil, no zeal. Let's say one thing, that there's a connection why I bring this story up.

[4 : 10] Sometimes evangelism can feel like that for us. Hard soil, and if we're honest, a lack of zeal. No zeal. There's a lot of connections and commonalities between evangelism and canvassing in an election.

And like I said, here in Ottawa in 2024, it feels a lot like being a conservative, knocking on doors in Ottawa-Vanier in 2015.

Or 2025, whenever the next election is. Hard soil, and no zeal. So we come to the second half of Acts 17. And the Apostle Paul's famous Mars Hill address.

The Areopagus is just to say it's the hill of Ares. It's Mars Hill. It's the same thing. And we see that the Athenians, in many ways, aren't much different than the citizens of Ottawa today.

In terms of their leanings, their desires, their proclivities, and most importantly for us this morning, their idolatry. And friends, I am referring not just to people in Ottawa that are out there, but in here as well.

[5 : 29] So here's the thing. The beauty of a text like this, and the beauty of preaching through books of the Bible, means that we are going to face some difficulty in the text that is going to attack our own sensibilities, and expose our own hearts for being the idol factories that they are.

In our text, we'll also see that there is great hope in the gospel for the idol worshipers, even those sitting beside you and who's speaking to you right now.

So, for the sake of breaking up the text, we'll break it up into three sections. The first, we'll see that idolatry is evil and ubiquitous. It's evil and it's everywhere.

The second thing we'll see is that idolatry is deeply incoherent. And then the third and final thing is that there is a great antidote and cure for idolatry.

So jump in the text with me. We'll be in verse 16 for our first point. Again, page 102. It says this, 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.

[6 : 50] So if you remember the past few weeks, great. If you haven't or if you're visiting, a bit of a recap. The apostle Paul and his companions have been traveling the second missionary journey.

And they have had success, but they have had a lot of opposition. They have endured great hardships. They have been embarrassed. They have been wrongfully arrested.

They have been beaten. They have been run out of town. They have been attacked. They've been subjected to mob violence. And yet, the gospel message has continued to be fruitful wherever it has gone.

The previous section in verse 17 saw Paul in Thessalonica, which was the capital of Macedonia.

The mob came after him.

He went to Berea. And now he was encouraged to essentially just take some time out, more or less, to recoup. And now he is in Athens waiting for Timothy and Silas.

[7 : 52] He's supposed to get a bit of R&R.; And he looks around. And what does he see? He sees the Athenian structures, the architecture.

Does he go visit museums, if there are museums, to look at the history of Socratic thought and Plato, the pedigree of Athenian philosophy?

Does he think about, wow, democracy, it has taken root in Athens and it's going to spread across the world. There's a lot to see in Athens.

But instead, what he sees is idolatry. He can't help but see it. The Apostle Paul is about the glory of God. And when he sees things that don't just not stack up to the glory of God or give God glory, but look to actively subvert God's glory, doesn't sit well with him.

His R&R; will have to be put on pause. And it says here in verse 16 that his spirit was provoked. Now, it's a good word, I suppose. The original language has this image of the word provoked, has this image of his spirit seizing.

[9 : 15] The best I could think of it is if you had like a big gut punch. You feel kind of sick to your stomach over something that is just troubling you. It's something that just rattles your cage.

It's difficult. It's not like, oh, that's unfortunate, idols. Too bad for them. His very spirit is seizing. He is a giant gut punch.

He sees idols everywhere. He sees shrines everywhere. He sees temples everywhere. And what Paul notices, again, isn't the architecture.

It's not the philosophy. It's not democracy. It's not any of these things. But he sees the true beating heart of this city. More than anything else, the true measure of a city is not the things it has or the reputation it boasts of, but the gods it worships.

That's the true beating heart of the city. That's the true beating heart of you and I. What is it that the city of Athens worships?

[10:18] And it is not the one true living God, but a plethora of gods. In a place like Athens, those idols were obvious to the naked eye. Like I mentioned, temples everywhere.

A few centuries before Paul arrived, the philosopher Xenophon, he said Athens was one great altar, one great sacrifice. Nothing had changed in the centuries after that quote.

It was also said of Athens, there were more gods than there were people. It was obvious. You saw everything. The worship of Ares or Mars, Nike, Zeus, Caesar himself, Athena.

Not to mention the household gods, the family gods that were worshipped. They're obvious. But here's the thing about idols. They're not merely shrines.

They're not merely what goes on in temples. They're not merely statues to pagan gods. But it describes anything, any person, anything that a human being puts eternal hope in.

[11:22] Anything that promises genuine and true prosperity and requires quite the sacrifice in return. The late J.I. Packer, if you've been around an evangelical church, you've likely heard of his name.

He was Annex-Own. He was a part of our denomination before he passed away. And he said this of idolatry in his Knowing God book. This is his famous book. He says this, Idolatry, quote, quote, Idolatry is any practice that honors and serves any creative thing as a god.

It is not only the adoration of images and false deities, but also the worship of what ought to be used and the use of what ought to be worshipped. You catch that last bit there.

Dr. Packer, he talks about idolatry being a perversion and an inverse of the way God has designed humanity to worship and to enjoy him.

He says this, that worship is, where does it say this here, that worship is the things, is to worship, sorry, the worship of what ought to be used and the use of what ought to be worshipped.

[12:37] So what does idolatry do? It upends the created order. It turns everything upside down. In the first half of Acts 17, last week, you would have remembered that one of the accusations against Paul was that he and his companions were turning the world upside down.

That's very apt. It's a very apt thing that Luke, the biographer of Acts, records. It is to take God and use him and the things, wealth, beauty, reputation, whatever it may be, social connections, things that are good but are just tools or aspects of life and elevate them to be worshipped.

It is the complete upending of God's created order. It is also a failure to understand that life and everything in it has a reason for its creation and a purpose or a direction to where it is headed, namely the worship and eternal glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This opens us up to the reality that we are worshippers, whether we like it or not. We cannot not worship.

We just cannot. It is something that is baked into our very DNA. We will find something to worship. There are no true atheists, non-worshippers.

[14:14] Everybody is a worshipper. We are created to worship, created to know the sacred and transcendent triune God. But here's the thing, and to give him glory, of course, but here's the thing.

Sin enters the human reality. Our disposition to worship does not change, but our object of worship changes in a huge way.

And we make gods out of little things, not the one eternal triune God. Therefore, idolatry is incredibly disrespectful and dishonoring to the glory and renown of the one true God.

But it's also incredibly destructive and disastrous to all who practice it. Because we are putting eternal hope and joy and security in things that cannot produce those things, and we are cutting ourselves off from the only true source of life itself.

So Athens worshipped idols, physical carvings, gilded things in shrines, in temples, in their own homes.

[15:26] But as we just saw, idols can be anything. So how about Ottawa? If the true gauge or the beating heart of the city is what it worships, what does this city worship?

What do we worship? What are our gods? Let's say this. I mean, there's a million people in Ottawa. How many countries are represented in this city? Dozens and dozens and dozens and dozens.

So I want to be careful to not brush a million plus people with one brush stroke. But I'll throw out a few ideas in terms of how we are idolaters.

In suburban Ottawa, Kanata, Stitzville, parts of Barhaven, we are rife with false gods. Here are a few of them. Our identity, especially in this city, our identity.

We want to be put together people. We want a good reputation. Money, therefore, can easily, all too easily become an idol. We don't see money as a tool, but as a master.

[16:32] Status in work. Promotions, raises, better titles. Our status among our peers, our comfort. I said our good reputation.

Pleasure and sex. Living through our children. Our free time. The list goes on and on. These are just a few things. Here's one for me.

Okay? I'll share with you one of my default bits of Daniel idolatry. Maybe you want to share it with me after one of yours.

Or not. That's totally fine. I really enjoy being a pastor. I really do. I love it. It's hard work. But it's good. It's wonderful. It's fun. But here's where it becomes an idol for me.

Okay? I'm a pastor primarily to help people, and myself, but to help people, to help you glorify and worship God. To become more like Christ.

[17:32] To know God's word in deeper ways. To trust in him. But if I'm honest, what I really like, what really kind of gets me happy and scratches my itch, is being seen as a wise person.

Or to be really liked. Or to be sought after. Because, my goodness, there's a problem, and maybe Daniel can fix it. I kid you not. I'm dead serious in this.

And all of a sudden, this shepherding role, this pastoring role, which is not mine. It is Christ. I'm an under-shepherd. I am a servant. It becomes the platform for my own pride to flourish.

And my own reputation to grow. And my own love of self to blossom and bloom. See how anything can be idolatrous. I appreciate your prayers, by the way.

I genuinely would. Be honest with yourself. What are the good things? The great things in your life that you have put a bit too much hope in.

[18:44] Or you have not seen them as things to be used, or tools to be had, or just nice things that are a part of your life, but have become gods that you're willing to sacrifice for.

Be honest. Be terribly honest. And ask the Lord to, by his Spirit, open your eyes and reveal the truth to you. And you might feel ashamed. You might feel the weight of it.

But this wonderful reality of seeing life for what it truly is will lead us to renounce them and to repent. And we'll see about repentance at the end.

It's one of the antidotes for idolatry. But it will be the beginning of you worshipping God rightly. I mentioned before about the human heart being an idol factory.

John Calvin says this, The human heart is a perpetual idol factory. It is in man's nature to idolize, and the mind begets an idol, and the hand gives it birth.

[19:47] Anything, anything we can think of, we can make into an idol. So you see that idolatry is terribly evil, and it's everywhere. So as we return to our text, we understand why Paul was so provoked within his spirit.

He is provoked not for his own glory, but for the glory befitting the Lord, and for the salvation of the Athenian people. He sees the idol worship, and it is just seizing his spirit.

It's giving him a gut punch. These are the people that God loves but are confused, even though they boast incredible philosophical clarity. These are the people even that are terribly weak, though they boast incredible strength.

And this leads the Apostle Paul to action. And in doing so, we will see, this is the second point, that idolatry is terribly incoherent.

Look with me, verses 17 to 21, and we'll read the whole section here. So he reasoned, this is the Apostle Paul, in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

[21:00] 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 or Mars Hill, 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.

Verse 21, now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new. Paul doesn't stand idly by.

He sees the idolatry, and like I said, he doesn't say, that's tough, I need my rest. He jumps right into it. He is provoked to both compassion for the Athenians, and like I mentioned, to provoke to see the

Lord's name be lifted high.

And he reasons everywhere. He is with the Jews and the devout people, which are like Jewish proselytites in the synagogue. He is in the marketplace with passerbys, and now he is sparring with some of the main philosophers of the day that seem to be mocking him and definitely are misunderstanding what he is saying and what he is purporting to believe.

[22 : 18] So some of the mocking philosophers were the Epicureans and the Stoics. They called Paul a babbler. And this is, again, this is where it's tough. I mean, I am no Greek scholar, but it's helpful to dig deep into some of the commentaries with the original language.

It doesn't grasp what is being said in the Greek. The word, the babbler, is this word that's used only here in all of Greek literature, Bible or not, and it's describing a bird that is pecking at and picking up seeds.

And the idea behind it is Paul is this kind of bespoke spiritualist. He has a few ideas. He's believed a few different things. He's kind of amalgamated a bunch of different spiritualities and philosophies. It's all half-baked. What he's purporting to preach is just a bunch of garbage. It's kind of like getting all of your spiritual and philosophical fix from TikTok and kind of like boiling it down and saying, I know the secrets of the universe.

That's what they're essentially accusing him of. He is a babbler, but really he is a half-baked, like wannabe philosopher, spiritualist.

[23 : 36] He ought not to be listened to. He's being mocked. The Apostle Paul. He's also accused of introducing foreign gods, and that's an interesting thing.

Some philosophers think, it says here he's accused of this because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection as if Jesus was one God and the resurrection was another God.

Interesting food for thought. Nevertheless, he is being misunderstood and belittled. And what he doesn't do, he doesn't defend himself. In other parts of scripture, he will talk about his own reputation and his own credentials, but even there, it's always, whenever Paul does it, it's always for the sake of proclaiming the glory of God.

Here, he doesn't push back against them and say, what are you talking about? Do you know who I've studied under? Do you know the type of pedigree I have? He doesn't say anything. Instead, he takes the opportunity afforded to him to, again, reason and proclaim the truth of scripture.

And in doing so, this is the genius of this, and we're not going to jump into it too, too much, but the apostle Paul both commends their philosophy, but also condemns it in one sermon.

[24 : 52] So what are those beliefs? What are those beliefs that he condemns and commends? So we have two examples, the Epicureans and the Stoics. I mean, we have people that are like chin deep in philosophy in this congregation.

You can seek them out and get more of a background on both of these philosophies after the service. But in short, the prevailing philosophies, if we're going to combine them together, from Epicureanism, there was a high value of pleasure and escapism.

Chance, self-sufficiency, reason, endurance, and those latter three were from the Stoics. So we have an interesting bit of kind of conflicting but coherent to each other philosophies that both say, listen, there is no God.

Well, maybe there's a God but he's so far and distant so listen, there's no life to come. Let's just enjoy it for what it is. And then this other group, they're saying, hard work, rationality, personal responsibility, mental resilience.

This is what we are going to rely on. Again, maybe there's a God, maybe there's not a God. Who cares? This is the life we have. So we have these two philosophies that essentially reject God, focus on this life in different ways, and yet at the same time, there's this plethora of gods for all sorts of different beliefs that you sacrifice to for various things.

[26 : 25] It's a big giant philosophical and religious soup. And there's a giant incoherence within it. There is no one truth that creates a framework by which you can be certain that you can have true joy and true meaning and true purpose and also have an assurance that the life to come is even there, let alone a life that has, again, purpose and meaning and truth and joy.

There's some rightly held beliefs, but overall, a giant soup of inconsistency and incoherence.

I would say there's a similar situation here in Ottawa with affluence comes an overemphasis on self-sufficiency and an overindulgence also in pleasure and leisure that can take the form of escapism.

The here and now, here in our day, by and large, again, broad brushstrokes, the here and now is emphasized while eternity is either ignored or denied.

Very interesting that, that like the Athenians, the afterlife is just a maybe at best. There's a claim here in Ottawa of self-sufficiency, but if we're honest, we can't live without our phones.

[27 : 58] We are, we fancy ourselves as resilient until a gadget breaks or a sickness hits or a bad interaction with a co-worker happens. This week, I tell you, I've shared this with a couple people, we had like two or three nights where there was minimal sleep and my self-resiliency went out the window.

We've been sleeping really good. We have younger kids, but they sleep through the night fairly well. We had our little guy, he's not here this morning, he was up coughing like two nights in a row. Christine and I, we had maybe an hour and a half straight of sleep.

So interesting how self-resiliency disappears when you're tired. like we just discussed, friends, we are worshipful people with the idolatry in our own lives.

So here we are, people that are also kind of confused and incoherent in our belief system. We do have a very similar philosophical and religious soup.

So, sharing the gospel. Hard soil, lack of zeal. The hard soil, I think, is always going to exist.

[29 : 16] Okay? It's just the reality of it. We scatter seed as the parable that Jesus shares about the different kinds of soil.

And where it lands, it's not up to us. But the zeal, and I say zeal because obedience can only be a motivating factor for so much.

And even compassion can only be a motivating factor for so much. But a zeal for the glory of God is like the highest form of motivation. Why do we lack such zeal when it comes to sharing our faith?

Because, like I've shared and maybe you've been thinking about, we are more Athenian in our religious proclivities than we'd like to admit. We find a small view of, we find that we have a small view of the glory of God and a big view of our own importance.

We make much of the here and now and little of eternity. We're fine if God's name and his glory gets tarnished or disrespected or dishonored.

[30 : 28] but if our name gets dragged through the mud just a bit, we will turn heaven and earth upside down. So how do we move past this?

How do we find coherence? How do we find consistency? How do we find truth? Where is the antidote for the idolatry in our own lives but also so that we can then proclaim this better message, this better news to those around us?

We find that the antidote for idolatry is in the next section, verses 22 to 31. This is what Josiah read and it is an incredible condensed version of orthodox theology.

The gospel is woven in there. I'll just say this. Orthodox theology is a beautiful thing because it leads us to truth and it allows us to worship in a proper way before the one true God.

So read with me verses just 22 and 23. We're going to kind of go through this somewhat quickly but also fairly methodically. The apostle Paul at Mars Hill, he will both commend and condemn the Athenian people for their idolatry in four big theological ways.

[31 : 54] He subverts it in four big theological ways. Verse 22 and then we'll just jump into it. So verses 22 and 23 says this. So Paul standing in the midst of the Areopagus said, Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.

This is a good thing. He is commending them in them thinking in a religious way. 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. Pause really quickly. He is finding these cultural bridges, these religious bridges, and it's a wonderful thing.

What Paul isn't doing here is he isn't somehow making a case for a pluralistic religious view. We'll see, it'll be very obvious what's coming next, is that he is making a case that there is one true God and there's one true way to worship him and it's through Christ.

But what he is not saying here is that all roads lead to Rome. So, he's going to lay out some orthodox theology.

[33 : 05] The first truth, verses 24 and 25, that God is the creator and sustainer of all. This is what it says, the God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, he 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.

If God is the creator and sustainer of all, how on earth can we limit or localize this God? creating a statue that is supposed to represent the God who created everything, but we're representing him in the very elements that he created himself?

He does not need to be fed by our prayers or alms or cared for. He is not dependent upon us for his sustenance. Therefore, the Apostle Paul is saying to the Athenians, the one true God is omniscient. He is all-powerful. There is no power greater than him. In fact, he is the source of all power. He lacks nothing. He's completely self-sufficient. Therefore, it is we who need him.

And he delights to give us what we need. He gives us life and breath and everything. This is who this God is. He's omniscient. The second thing, verses 26.

[34 : 35] 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. There's a lot to say here.

There's a lot to say here, but just to say that the Lord is sovereign over all. There is no power greater than him. He is, again, in need of nothing.

He is sovereign over all. And this doesn't mean that in his sovereignty where he has created the world and put everything in its place and he rules over history, that he is somehow responsible for evil and tyranny and the despots that have peppered history throughout the ages.

But it is to say that he is sovereign over history. He's sovereign over the rising and falling of nations. And we see that all of this is for the purpose of sinful and bent humanity so that we can turn to him and seek his face.

It is not that God is far from us, it is that we are far from him. And he is waiting to be found in Christ Jesus. Those in humility who throw themselves at the mercy and grace of Christ, he will be found.

[35 : 59] This is why all roads do not lead to eternity with God, but only through Christ. It also means that God must reveal himself to us.

And his sovereignty means that he is able to do just that. So the third truth, that we are made in God's image, not the other way around. Look with me here in verses, the second part of verse 28 and 29.

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.

Once again, we see that idolatry inverts this created order. We are made in God's image, which means we are in a sense icons of God. Now, we are deeply marred and tarnished by sin, so therefore we do not reflect God's glory in the way that God has intended.

And a big part of the reason why we don't reflect God's glory is that we try to make God into our own image. Again, things are inverted. We try to make an idol out of God, a double disrespect, for it implies that God can be captured in an image made by his creation, and that we somehow have the capacity to capture that image.

[37 : 22] Finally, the fourth thing, verses 30 to 31, says this, the times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed the 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.

The fourth and final bit of theology Paul preaches on is that God is a righteous and judge, and just judge. The one true sovereign God has made himself known and therefore to all, and therefore his judgment is universal.

It is completely righteous, and it will happen. It's definitely going to happen. The day of judgment is fixed. It means no one will be without excuse.

It says here that he commands all to repent, all to humbly throw themselves at the mercy of God in Christ. And by the way, that might make us feel very uncomfortable, because judgment is always negative.

We don't want to be judgmental people. That might be a part of our own kind of idolatry. We want to be liked by everybody, so the idea of being judgmental will make people not like us.

[38 : 40] We don't like it. It's uncomfortable. I get it. I feel the same way. But understand that the Apostle Paul isn't saying that God is the judge of all to scare the Athenians into some kind of submission, but it is ultimately good news, and it's good news for us.

For those of us who are facing judgment because of sin, because of the brokenness in our own life, because of the things we have done in the past, and as we get older, that list continues to grow. Things we're ashamed of, things that we'd be happy would disappear from existence. We have affronted, we have caused an affront to the one true just God, and his judgment towards us is just, but here's the thing.

His judgment is sure, but it has already been poured out on Jesus Christ, in our place, on the cross, that God has made a way for us to somehow survive his just judgment because somebody else took it upon himself and paid the penalty in our place.

God is just, he is just, but he is also merciful. And in Christ we see this beautiful, beautiful marriage between justice and mercy.

[40 : 06] he will shower grace upon grace for those that are in Christ Jesus. So judgment ultimately for those in Jesus is not a picture of damnation, but a picture of salvation.

What Paul is doing here, he's completely upending the Athenian way of thinking, the Athenian philosophy, the Athenian religious structures. And he is saying that there is a better way and that there is true worship to be had and to be participated in.

And we start to see that real, true, godly, biblical theology, it leads to real, true, godly, and biblical doxology, that is worship. I'll close with this.

Idolatry is abhorrent because God is untamable. He cannot be localized, he cannot be manipulated, he cannot be domesticated, there's no kind of quid pro quo with God.

I've done this for you, you owe this to me. We cannot create icons of God, but here's the thing. God, the son of God, becomes incarnate and he takes upon himself human flesh, perfectly representing God, the father, for he remained God, but also perfectly representing mankind because he was fully man.

[41 : 33] Therefore, Christ is the ultimate and perfect icon of God. Not an idol, but an icon, the perfect window for us to see God, the father almighty.

If you see the son, you see the father. If you know the son, you know the father. And why did he do this? So that by faith, we would become united with him and enjoy a real, genuine, eternal relationship with almighty God.

No longer under the subjugation and the slavery of idol worship. We can be free. And if you are like me and struggle with idolatry, if you struggle with making much of this life and little of eternity, if you struggle with zeal for God's glory, friends, I will say this, cast your eyes upon Christ.

Think about him. Dwell on him. Ask him by his spirit to rip apart the idolatry in your life, to expose it for what it is.

And friends, throw yourself at the mercy of God almighty. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the Apostle Paul. We thank you for his sermon at the Areopagus at Mars Hill.

[42 : 53] We thank you that he did not shy away from telling the truth, that he didn't love his life more than he was about your glory. Lord, he is a wonderful example to us.

And by your spirit, Lord, we want to be more and more like him. But Lord, actually, we want to be more and more like your blessed son, who perfectly represented you, who had no idols at all, but he is the object of our worship.

Lord, help us to be more and more like Christ, to gaze upon him, to trust in him more, to value him above all else, to trust in him above and beyond. And Lord, help us, again, by your spirit, by faith, to long for eternity with Christ that begins in part now, but will be in full in the life to come.

We pray all of this in Christ's name. Amen.