

Acts 17:22–31

Ps. 66:8–20

1 Pet. 3:13–22

John 14:15–21

Knowing God

Focus on Acts 17:22–31

WHAT is important to know?

—From “Exegetical Perspective” by Michael Joseph Brown

What is important is the speech itself. What the speech attacks, using the very arguments of Greek philosophy, is popular Greek religious practice—the worship of idols—and not the religious theorizing of the philosophers. Then why direct his speech at these philosophers? It may be because they represent the highest of Greek culture. Nevertheless, something is still odd about this passage. One does not get the impression that Luke is thinking of such a specialized audience, cultured elites who occupy their time with intellectual matters. Paul speaks, in a sense, to the whole of Athens, and through Athens to the entirety of Greek culture and religiosity.

WHERE is God in these words?

—From “Theological Perspective” by Sean A. White

As we confess in the Apostles’ Creed, “we believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son . . . who ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father, from whence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.” In our own restlessness, we have retrieved “the unknown god” and entrusted those who consider themselves religious to name this deity as they will. Reminiscent of the ancient philosophers, Ravi Zacharias writes, Jesus “told us that the only way we could understand who we are is to cast our gaze . . . on the relationship toward which we move in the sum total of our being,” the relationship with Christ and Christ alone.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From “Pastoral Perspective” by Randle R. (Rick) Mixon

The challenge is to say to those around us, “We see your spiritual hunger. Might we offer sustenance from our rich store of spiritual resource?” The challenge is to find the imagery and language that allow us to enter another’s world in order to speak our truth honestly, respectfully, and effectively. What does it mean to be so fully rooted and grounded in God, so centered in our own experience of the Christian story, that we cannot keep from sharing it? In the words of the old hymn, when we feel our faith in our very bones, “how can we keep from singing?”

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

—From “Homiletical Perspective” by John S. McClure

Much of the art and creative productivity in this world, at its deepest level, is expressive of the *Spiritus Creator*, God’s ever-creating Spirit present within all creative process. Rather than shunning this creative potential, Paul recognizes it all around him and celebrates it as something that could potentially open us to the God who wants to be known in Jesus Christ. We as preachers can encourage congregations toward this same kind of “doxological living,” in which we are thankful for all of the gifts around us, no matter how ambiguous, and are always looking for and finding in all human endeavors the unknown God and the desire to know more about that God.

Acts 17:22-31 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

²² Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. ²³ For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. ²⁶ From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, ²⁷ so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. ²⁸ For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said,

‘For we too are his offspring.’

²⁹ Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. ³⁰ While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

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