



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 60 Getting to Know the Unknowable God Pt. 5
By Pastor Jody May 12/24/2023

Acts 17:22-27 ESV

Paul Addresses the Areopagus

²²So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³For 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. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶And 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, ²⁷that 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, ²⁸for

“ ‘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.’

²⁹Being 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.

³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because 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.”

³²Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” ³³So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

[READ THE TEXT]

[PRAY]

[INTRO]



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[REVIEW]

Illustration – Traffic Stops, Revelation, Mercy, & Repentance.

Let's do this today. Let's picture the Apostle Paul has just sprung his speed trap and has pulled over the Athenians. They have been driving through their lives plowing along with ignorance of the stated laws of the universe. Paul, as we are reminded from v.16, was **provoked** into action because God's law of being worshipped as the one true God was being broken everywhere Paul looked. Out of this love for God and love for his fellow man, and because of His motto working through these past 5 weeks, **that men should seek God and perhaps find Him (on the back of his cruiser)** Paul pulls them over and begins to educate them on what's wrong.

First (week right after Thanksgiving), you did not come from Chaos, no, the true God, is a God of order, and He made you for a purpose, to know Him, that's the point of your existence to glorify the one true God.

Second, v.25 you *don't serve Him*, He does everything for you. 1st week of Advent, we focused on **HOPE**, and the fact God is Sustainer, and He has more than we need to deal with our worries over yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Ps. 55:22 "*Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved.*" That right there is real hope for this season!

Third, v.26 and *he made from one man every nation of mankind*. 2nd week of Advent, we focused on **JOY**, and the fact that God is the Ruler of the Nations. That also brought us to this fact that God answers the problem of 'racism' by clarifying through scripture there is only one race, man, and NO ONE is innocent because all are born into sin by one man, and all are saved by one man, but to be saved by Him, you must receive Him as King. Now that is a reason for joy!

Fourth, v.28-29 *you are God's offspring*, that desire was show to the Athenians by Paul through their own poets. 3rd week of Advent, we focused on **LOVE**, and



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the fact that God is the Father of all men. He's not an absent father but is a doting Father providing a way for us to inherit through Christ, what we lost in the beginning, a secured, sustained, and sublime Salvation. This is a true Christmas love that is not only given freely but guaranteed by the Father.

Now we are at the point that Paul says, you are *getting off with a warning*, but just as we have experienced in real life there is the command you must now heed the warning or otherwise all the good news you just heard is just null and void, you must **REPENT**. This is how we enter into **PEACE**, does one just take their warning and peel out as if it never happened or do we leave our encounter changed? If not, it means that one failed to notice who it was giving the warning.

5. God is both Judge and Rescuer.

When we fail to comply – responding to the grace and mercy proclaimed in the gospel, we ignore the fact that **we are not the ones to judge** whether we have done right or wrong but God. There is someone outside of us that does the judging and the rescuing. Just as in society we are not the law, there is a higher standard, a universal standard applied to all men, and therefore we are not the enforcers of it, but God is. This is exactly what we all are seeing played out in front of us in our society today. Men pushing on the boundaries of Grace and Mercy, refusing to see the law that is over all, and by their blatant ignorance they refuse the offer of rescue. And that literally makes the roads of our world unsafe for everyone, and the traffic is only getting worse.

In light of the season, I do want to offer everyone within ear shot, before you speed off into your Holiday Merry Making the chance for some real PEACE. In our last section of our Athenian debate Paul is going to give us this chance for rest by showing us 3 different things: God just doesn't deliver, **He assures the peace offered**, we will see the **skepticism in the offer of Peace**, and lastly if one can get over that skepticism the **beauty found in this peace**.

- **God delivers the assurance of Peace.**



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³⁰ The **times of ignorance God overlooked**, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,

Paul does the brave part of gospel work where many modern evangelists/preachers stop short at. He lets them know that all those things that they have been doing were not only incorrect but were wrong and sinful. As a matter of fact, it has only been by the grace of God, **“He’s overlooked your ignorance”** that you have not died without knowing the truth. That is where much of the modern church has failed to execute this very crucial part of Gospel Explanation. Often people are never told how reckless, harmful, self-destructive, and rebellious their sin is, therefore they never think much of the command for **repentance** for what they do really isn’t that bad? Well how bad is it really, the sin that we do that gets us pulled over?

Romans 3:24-25 ESV

²³ for **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are **justified** by his **grace as a gift**, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ When God put forward as a **propitiation** by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to **show God’s righteousness**, because in His forbearance He had passed over former sins.

v.24 First, we all needed to be **justified**, the legal term to balance out the scales of justice, what has been committed as sin against God, now must be paid for. Second, no one has this type of treasure in their account to satisfy God, the only one able to foot the bill for the price of sin, is Jesus Christ, so Jesus redeems us from judgment **by GRACE**, by footing our bill/fines.

V.25 Third, that loving Father we learned about last week, He posts the fine by putting forward Christ as a propitiation, simply means in place of, by His blood. That right there tells you the cost of all sin, the blood of life. Fourth, all you can do is accept that **by faith**, and you get to walk out of this life Scott-free from any penalties.

All of that Fifthly, shows you God’s righteousness, that’s why He has been overlooking past sins up to the point you have been metaphorically pulled over to hear this Gospel. It was right for Him to do so, because God in mercy



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and grace has looked over your transgressions until He could get you to stop to hear the charges. So, the only right thing to say at the end of v.30 as Paul puts it, **"he commands all people everywhere to repent"** since sin is that bad, the only thing a righteous God can say would be to say **stop it**, and **don't do it anymore**, change that mind from believing that what you were doing was ok.

Alright so why is it so important to address these fines right now.

³¹because 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."

Who is this man that has been appointed?

John 5:27 ESV

"And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man." - Jesus

Jesus is this man appointed by God, He will judge the world, by His righteousness, that same righteousness was proven by His resurrection, and the Father assures the WHOLE WORLD by the empty tomb that Jesus is enough, by making that resurrection public. This event showed everyone that the Son of God, that is tied into the royal treasury, is also as the Gospel of John said the Son of Man, can foot everyone's bill if they believe in Him AND repent. By the way faith + repentance is called CONVERSION.

When we talk about experiencing the **PEACE** of Christmas it only comes through the gracious and merciful forbearance of the Father, that tirelessly proclaims the Gospel in the incarnation of the ultimate judge, His Son, whom He raised from the dead to assure everyone that Jesus really can foot the bill for your sin. Peace too can be yours by faith AND repentance, now go and sin no more!

- **Skepticism in the offer of Peace.**



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³² Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." ³³ So Paul went out from their midst.

Notice, the Greeks didn't have a problem with everything Paul was saying until he got to the part about the resurrection. First, the Greeks didn't have a concept about judgment day, there was no reason for them to fear a future whereby God would right every wrong. The Jews remember had the OT and talked about the "Day of the Lord" extensively and that is why **the Messiah was needed to usher in this day**, Greeks had no such concept. Secondly, there was no need for a resurrection then to be brought back for judgment, your eternal place of rest was determined in this life by your actions of how well you spent your life doing your calling. Thirdly, the flesh is bad, you didn't want to be resurrected in it, that was what caused you problems, to live eternally in the Spirit is to be unburdened for eternity.

All of that means why should they fear what they did in the flesh, since it was their destiny to fulfill the rolls, they were born into, and there is no future judgment to worry about.

This is the same attitude that we still battle today. The Effects of Greek thought and education are still with us folks. Modern philosophical thought and self-help psychology is to help us cope with how we are, and to live for the day, "*seize the day*" (The Roman poet Horace stole from the Epicureans)¹. Since this is always pushed down our throats it is something that we always

¹ **carpe diem**, (Latin: "pluck the day" or "seize the day") phrase used by the Roman poet [Horace](#) to express the idea that one should enjoy life while one can.

Carpe diem is part of Horace's injunction "*carpe diem quam minimum credula postero*," which appears in his *Odes* (I.11), published in 23 BCE. It can be translated literally as "pluck the [day](#), trusting as little as possible in the next one." The phrase *carpe diem* has come to stand for Horace's entire injunction, and it is more widely known as "seize the day."

This [sentiment](#) has been expressed in many literatures before and after Horace. It appears in [ancient Greek literature](#), especially [lyric poetry](#), and it intersects with the teachings of the Greek philosopher [Epicurus](#) and what would come to be known as [Epicureanism](#). In [English literature](#) it was a particular preoccupation of poets during the 16th and 17th centuries. Among the [Cavalier poets](#), [Robert Herrick](#) expressed a sharp sense of *carpe diem* in the first stanza of "To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time" (included in *Hesperides*, published 1648): <https://www.britannica.com/topic/carpe-diem>



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need to be reminded about, where have we allowed the pagan views to capture our worldview and get us to act differently than we should.

Looking back at Paul's sermon let's review for a moment before we rush into 2024, are there some views that we have picked up along the way, that are making us a little skeptical about achieving real Peace this season.

If **God is Creator**, and we learned that the point of our existence is to know Him and make much of Him, let me ask all of us in here, did 2023 reflect that truth? Did we spend our time trying to discover ways of improving our life with Him? Did you spend more time with the body of Christ this year where you learn how to live in this world and you are protected from idolatry of self or did 2023 find you more absent from this body, you had more excuses to be away than here? That is reflection of Greek thought where the point of existence is to eat, drink, and be merry, that doesn't reflect that you were wanting to know God more, the point of your existence.

If **God is Sustainer**, and if He holds all things by the Word of His power, then why are you fretting so much over your life? Perhaps you are making a lot of decisions right now out of fear like where to spend your money, because you are wrapped up into what can your money do for you now, instead of thinking how do I invest in a cause that is eternal? Was 2023 a year for you that you were achieving your giving goals for the ministry of this church, or did you miss that opportunity again? Let us all practice better in 2024 through our bank accounts a better trust in God and give to God out of the first fruits, of what we take in, not the last.

If **God is Ruler of the Nations**, and He sees all as one race, then perhaps your thing this year is not get so worked up over politics, while at the same time you may be the same one that needs to open up your mouth more to correct those that see everything from the eyes of Social Justice. Maybe you are the one that needs to speak out more on abortion because it is not that woman's life, it is God's life, and He owns both the woman's and the child's. Wherever you are at maybe 2024 needs to be more about making much of the views of God, and less about quietly voting your conscience. If God is truly the Ruler then you are truly His Herald, now go make His will known!



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If **God is the Father of all**, and he has lovingly **guaranteed your inheritance**, then heads of home how have you been doing at passing along the sense of family loyalty and pride in your home. Have you actively been teaching on a regular basis in your home that your family name now is covered/redeemed by the name of Christ and are you teaching your own family what that means? Fathers/Mothers do you disciple your children and wives, do you lead them in acts of kindness to your neighbors, do you make sure they are sabbathing once a week focusing on God, are you making sure they get to church, are you making sure they go through their catechism, are you making sure your kids are learning to offer their firstfruits, are you inviting other believers to break bread in your home, are you inviting the lost and sharing Christ at your tables, are you treating your inheritance among your family with the respect and reverence it deserves? If not begin thinking now how 2024 will be different.

If any of that is you, then in the name of Jesus, I call you to repent, every one of you. For God has been gracious and merciful to us and has overlooked our ignorance but now calls us to go and sin no more, to embrace His son's payment once again, and live as men who have found Peace in His offering.

- **The beauty found in this Peace.**

³⁴ But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Some accepted that what they were doing was wrong, among them even one of the leaders of the Areopagus accepted the reasoning of Paul. The joy they had found in Christ and His Gospel, was more than the offer of Greek thought, and that was all given graciously by the work of the HS. There was more to explain for those that wanted to listen to the Truth, as there is more for us to hear this morning as well. I want us to go to a famous Christmas passage now, and see the beauty of this Peace that God has made for us, and explain the perfectness of **Jesus His appointed Judge, who is also our Rescuer.**

The beauty of accepting God as both Judge and Rescuer.



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Isaiah 11:1-5 ESV

The Righteous Reign of the Branch

- 11** There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse,
and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
- 2** And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him,
the Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and might,
the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.
- 3** And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

Everything this judge needed to be THE SUPREME judge was given by God (He was of Jewish descent, from among the elect in His family line, that believed in the Day of the Lord) so you and I can rest assured that this judge will not be tainted from Greek/pagan thoughts.

- He shall not judge by what his eyes see,
or decide disputes by what his ears hear,
- 4** but with righteousness he shall judge the poor,

This judge can't be influenced by false evidence because His righteousness, as shown by a resurrection, allows Him never to be swayed by any offer of bribe or threat.

and decide with equity for the meek of the earth;

This judge judges all on equal scales and sees all as sinners in need of being justified, no one gets away with anything, BUUT all only get what they deserve.

and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth,
and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.



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This judge when He does pass judgement on those that fail to repent, only those that deserve punishment will get it, and all power to cast the judgement is in His hand, He relies on no one to carry out the sentencing.

⁵ Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist,
and **faithfulness** the belt of his loins.

Lastly, He is put together that at His core His faithfulness to His righteousness always comes first, this judge, will never change...

Peace comes to us at last this Christmas for we have found our perfect judge and rescuer, from the line of David, equality for all, punishment for the wicked, never changing.

We know He is worthy to judge because of His resurrection.
We know He is worthy to judge, because of His untainted lineage.
We know He is worthy to judge because of His power save and condemn.

May we all find our rest and peace from 2023 in love of our Judge and Rescuer, and may we bask in the light of His Glory and Grace.

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that provided for us the perfect judge and rescuer showing us His worth through the resurrection.

Go in the name of the Son, that offers His life as our payment for sin, calling on our allegiance through the act of faith and repentance.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, that allows us to confess our sin, by opening our eyes to the need of our judge and rescuer, now go and share this good news with your world.