

### **Recap of 4/3/22 message by Chris Sommerfield – Acts 17:16-21**

1. *The world today is not so different from the world Paul engaged in Athens. Epicurean and Stoic philosophy is still very present today, not merely taught as an intellectual exercise, but ingrained in the very way people think about the world. Epicureans were similar to secular agnostics believing that there may be a god or many gods, but we cannot know if this is true so we should just live our lives. Do what makes you happy. Diogenes summarizes their view of life: “Nothing to fear in God; Nothing to feel in death; Good [pleasure] can be attained; Evil [pain] can be endured.” Stoics were pantheists, believing that God is in everything and kinship with the divine can be attained through reason, unifying humanity, and self-sufficiency. These ideas are still very much prevalent today.*

2. *Paul is provoked when he sees the idolatry of the people of Athens. It’s the same word used of God’s response to idolatry (Isaiah 65:3; Hosea 8:5). We too should be bothered by idolatry, both in our lives and in our community. Idolatry extends beyond the worship of idols and images and false gods. Our modern idols are many and varied. Even for those who do not bow physically before a statue, idolatry is a matter of the heart—pride, self-centeredness, greed, gluttony, a love for possessions and ultimately rebellion against God (Houdmann).*

3. *Paul does not respond to the idolatry by ripping apart the marketplace or organizing a political movement complete with picketing and boycotting. Paul responded by sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul was faithful to deliver the message of good news, for it is the Gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit that changes people’s hearts. Political activism may have its place as a tool for the social good; however, it can never be our only or primary means of engagement. The Word must be preached, the Gospel shared, and faithfulness to God ever present in our own lives.*

4. *Some people Paul spoke to did not understand him calling him a babbler. When you share the Gospel there will be people that do not understand and think of you as a babbler. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:14-15, “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.” To unbelievers’ spiritual matters can appear like foolish nonsense. Our job is not to make people believe. Our job is to be faithful to deliver the message of Jesus Christ. God is the one who works in people changing their heart.*