

Recap of 4/24/22 message by Joe Ricchuiti – Acts 17:20-34

1. More and more we are engaging a biblically illiterate culture without the knowledge of God and the Bible. Consequently, our witness must begin where Paul began in Acts 17—with the God Who is creator, sustainer, sovereign ruler, and who will one day be their Judge. Every point Paul made answered some errant view of God held by the Athenian philosophers.

- “Paul’s sermon on Mars Hill is a classic example of what today is called ‘contextualization.’ He did not begin with quotes from the Jewish Scripture, or a review of Hebrew history. Rather Paul drew on pagan Greek poets to establish a point of contact, and then went on to proclaim God’s truth.”

- Suit your approach to your audience. But don’t change the Gospel to make it more respectable.” (Richards)

- Acts 17 is a model for us today as the church faces a similar religious, philosophical, and intellectual vacuum.

- “Paul begins where his listeners were and leads them from their inadequate concepts of the truth.” (Toussaint)

2. Idolatry was so rampant in Athens that “It was said that there were more statues of the gods in Athens than in all the rest of Greece put together and that in Athens it was easier to meet a god than a man.” (Barclay)

3. Paul calls the Athenians “very religious,” which means literally “to rigidly fear or revere, deities, evil spirits.” It was what one writer called “kindly ambiguous.” In effect saying that their deities were evil spirits or demons. Behind idols are demons not gods.

4. Salvation is through Jesus Christ, the appointed Judge whose true nature was proved by the resurrection. To reject Him is to face future judgment.

5. “Life is not a march to extinction (as the Epicureans believed), it is not a pathway to absorption to God (as the Stoics believed), It is a journey to the Judgment seat of God...” (Barclay)

6. “The God whom Paul proclaims is not just another option for human devotion, not an accommodating God content to be one among many. The God who sent the Christ is still the Holy One of Israel, a jealous deity without rivals, and exclusive lover who tolerates no competition—money, sex, philosophical ideals, institutions—who fiercely judges all idols made by hands or minds of men.” (Willimon)