

**Sunday November 20, 2022**

## **Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church**

### **Welcome & Prayer**

The writer of Psalm 47 says these words, *"Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy. <sup>2</sup>For the LORD Most High is awesome, the great King over all the earth. <sup>3</sup>He subdued nations under us, peoples under our feet. <sup>4</sup>He chose our inheritance for us, the pride of Jacob, whom he loved. <sup>5</sup>God has ascended amid shouts of joy, the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets. <sup>6</sup>Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. <sup>7</sup>For God is the King of all the earth; sing to him a psalm of praise. <sup>8</sup>God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne."*

Father, we want to come today to offer our praise to you. We need you to quieten our busy minds as we come humbly, struggling to understand the enormity of who you are and your love for us. We know Lord that you have always been here, the beginning and the end. Your creation reminds us that you are all powerful, that you hold the stars in your hands. You give us life and breath; you sustain us, pursue us and redeem us. You are the truth in a world full of lies, light in darkness, the giver of hope through grace. You offer us wisdom, comfort and healing through your overwhelming love.

We come today to claim forgiveness, forgiveness that we don't deserve. We allow ourselves to be pulled away from the truth that you have given us. We stray in so many directions and fail to stop and remember you. We forget that you are eternal, and focus instead on the here and now. We are sorry for not doing what we should do, for allowing our pride, self-centredness and sinful nature to guide the way we live. And yet, in spite of all this, you continue to love us as you always have. Help us to remember that this morning and open our hearts and minds to your leading. Amen

### **Song – The Glories of Calvary**

[The Glories of Calvary • Official Lyric Video on Vimeo](#)

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| <p>1. Lord, You're calling me to come<br/>And behold the wondrous cross<br/>To explore the depths of grace<br/>That came to me at such a cost<br/>Where Your boundless love<br/>Conquered my boundless sin<br/>And mercy's arms were opened wide</p> | <p>2. Sinners find eternal joy<br/>In the triumph of Your wounds<br/>By our Saviour's crimson flow<br/>Holy wrath has been removed<br/>And Your saints below<br/>Join with your saints above<br/>Rejoicing in the Risen Lamb</p> |
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Chorus.

My heart is filled with a thousand songs  
Proclaiming the glories of Calvary  
With every breath, Lord how I long  
To sing of Jesus who died for me  
Lord, take me deeper  
Into the glories of Calvary

### **Bible Reading – Acts 17:1-15 (NIV)**

*When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. <sup>2</sup>As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue & on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup>explaining & proving that the Messiah had to suffer & rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah," he said. <sup>4</sup>Some of*

*the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and quite a few prominent women. <sup>5</sup> But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd. <sup>6</sup> But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: "These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, <sup>7</sup> and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar's decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus." <sup>8</sup> When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. <sup>9</sup> Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go. <sup>10</sup> As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. <sup>11</sup> Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness & examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. <sup>12</sup> As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women & many Greek men. <sup>13</sup> But when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, some of them went there too, agitating the crowds & stirring them up. <sup>14</sup> The believers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas & Timothy stayed at Berea. <sup>15</sup> Those who escorted Paul brought him to Athens & then left with instructions for Silas & Timothy to join him as soon as possible.*

## Announcements

**Focus for November – One2One.** What do you actually do when you meet One2One? It normally involves catching up, Bible reading and prayer. Where can you do it? At home, in a park or a coffee shop. How often? Normally weekly or fortnightly. How long? Normally 45-60 minutes. With whom? Someone of your own sex, either younger, older or the same age. One2One is a very flexible and dynamic arrangement and can be done in many ways to suit both parties.

### Upcoming Events

- Sat 26/11           Gingerbread House Nigh. See Brochure for more details
- Fri 2/12            Snow Gums pool party at the Taylors.
- Sun 4/12           Lords Supper.
- Sat 10/12          Gather Round Christmas Celebration. Keep the date. More details soon.
- Sun 11/12         Kids Church Presentation.

**Leave.** Jon and Ang are on leave at the moment but will be back on deck tomorrow. Please continue to pray that they have a good break.

**Our quarterly Pastoral Care Group** will be meeting this afternoon at 4-4:45pm via ZOOM. The link is <https://uonewcastle.zoom.us/j/83647237090> All welcome.

**Vanuatu.** This year we are hoping to send a team to Vanuatu in January for a short-term mission to the towns of Walaha and Hog Harbour. This will be a mixture of building work, kids and youth ministry and teaching and training the locals in Christian discipleship. At present we are looking like we will have a team of up to 10 people which is really exciting but may also cause some logistical issues. Please pray that the doors will be opened for us to send such a team. And if you would like to support the team prayerfully then email/text Stephen and he will send you regular prayer updates. And if you would like to support the team financially, please mark your contribution "2023 Vanuatu". The cost to the Church will be approximately \$6,000. Not everyone can go on this year's short-term mission but everyone can be a part of it in one way or another!

**Complementarian Ministry.** This week many of our small groups have completed a study on complementarianism. If you would like to give our elders your feedback on this important topic, please could you do so before their next meeting on Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> November.

**Gala Concert.** Many thanks to all those who made the Gala Concert such a great success. We raised over \$4,500 for Destiny Haven.

**Giving.** Would you like to give regularly to the work of the church so that our ministries can be sustained or even grow? If so, the easiest way is by setting up a direct debit from your bank account. You just decide

you much you would like to give on a weekly basis and then organise that amount to go to our Church each week. If you would like help to set it up then please speak to Letitia. Otherwise, the Church Bank details are Charlestown Eastlakes Presbyterian BSB 062 611, account # 1007 5420.

**Kids Spot:** What a great lesson for today: when the word is taught and people are loved, the good news of Jesus spreads. We will learn this as we look at Acts 6: 1-7 where the apostles chose 7 helpers to care for those in need which allowed the apostles to keep teaching the word of God. Challenge for the week: Write a note or card to someone in our church family who teaches you the word of God and to someone who serves you in a practical way in the church. Thank them for this and encourage them in their ministry.

## Prayer Points for 20<sup>th</sup> November 2022

**Pray for the persecuted church.** That they would remain faithful even under extreme pressure. That they can shine like stars in the midst of a corrupt and depraved world. That their church would grow as the truth of the gospel goes out from their witness and words.

**Pray for the country of Indonesia** (Population 275million, Christians 34 million). **Converts** from Islam experience pressure from families to return to Islam. In many homes, families will verbally abuse Christians and isolate them because of their faith, while a small percentage of converts face physical violence. Churches that engage in evangelism are at particular risk of targeted attacks by Islamic extremist groups, particularly in West Java or Aceh. Pray for God's peace, comfort, and healing over those affected by extremist attacks. Pray that believers will follow Jesus & share the gospel boldness in the face of persecution. Ask the Lord to reveal Himself to those who oppose Him.

**Pray for those still affected by floods.** Pray that they might be able to get into their homes. That they will have support in the recovery phase. And that that in losing so much they might find that if they hand over the most important things to the Lord, he will keep them safe in his grip.

**Pray for A Roche**, as it considers buying land for conservation and a Christian field studies centre, and seeks partners to produce theological materials on the biblical basis for Creation care.

## Bible Reading – Acts 17:16-34

<sup>16</sup> While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. <sup>17</sup> So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. <sup>18</sup> A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus & the resurrection. <sup>19</sup> Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? <sup>20</sup> You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." <sup>21</sup> (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) <sup>22</sup> Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup> "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. <sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. <sup>28</sup> 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.' <sup>29</sup> "Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. <sup>30</sup> In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup> For he has set a day when he will

*judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”<sup>32</sup> When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.”<sup>33</sup> At that, Paul left the Council.<sup>34</sup> Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.*

## **Song – In Christ Alone** [In Christ Alone - Keith & Kristyn Getty, Alison Krauss - YouTube](#)

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|--|---|
| <p>1. In Christ alone my hope is found<br/>He is my light, my strength, my song<br/>This cornerstone, this solid ground<br/>Firm through the fiercest drought and storm<br/>What heights of love, what depths of peace<br/>When fears are stilled, when strivings cease<br/>My comforter, my all in all<br/>Here in the love of Christ I stand</p> | <p>3. There in the ground His body lay<br/>Light of the world by darkness slain<br/>Then bursting forth in glorious day<br/>Up from the grave He rose again<br/>And as He stands in victory<br/>Sin's curse has lost its grip on me<br/>For I am His and He is mine<br/>Bought with the precious blood of Christ</p>  |
| <p>2. In Christ alone who took on flesh<br/>Fullness of God in helpless babe<br/>This gift of love and righteousness<br/>Scorned by the ones He came to save<br/>Till on that cross as Jesus died<br/>The wrath of God was satisfied<br/>For every sin on Him was laid<br/>Here in the death of Christ I live</p>                                  | <p>4. No guilt in life, no fear in death<br/>This is the power of Christ in me<br/>From life's first cry to final breath<br/>Jesus commands my destiny<br/>No power of hell, no scheme of man<br/>Can ever pluck me from His hand<br/>Till He returns or calls me home<br/>Here in the power of Christ I'll stand</p> |

## **Sermon – Turning the world upside down (Stephen T)**

You would have to say that Greek philosophy and thought has changed the world. During the fifth century BC, people like Plato and Socrates developed sophisticated views on history, philosophy, democracy and many other ideas that are still influential today. You would also have to say that Roman might has changed the world. The Roman army conquered much of Europe, the middle east and northern Africa setting a benchmark for all other great kingdoms to follow.

You would have to say that Christianity has changed the world. The birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus dominated the western world for over almost two millennia changing all aspects of people's lives. You would have to say the Enlightenment has changed the world, introducing a man centred doctrine of life that replaced a God centred universe. And you would have to say science, nationalism, technology, communism, feminism, secularism have all recently left the world a very different place.

In Acts 17 we see the clash of two of these great earth changing movements. We see when Christianity meets Athens for the first time. And we will see how the west was won, how the western world fell to the Christian message. This has relevance today because in the last century or so, the west has been lost to the Christian faith. So maybe if we can learn the lessons of how it turned the world upside down in the first century AD, we might see it happen again in our own time.

Slide 2

### **1. Reasoned (verses 1-9)**

*“When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.”* Now I find that interesting. Why did Paul pass through two major towns and then stop at another one Thessalonica? Because he was being strategic. Yes, Amphipolis and

Apollonia were full of people needing to hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus but Paul was faced with the task of preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth.

So his strategy was where he could, to go to the key population centres, plant a Church there and trust that they would then take the good news to the surrounding communities.

Slide 3

Paul also had this strategy of going to the Jew first and then the Gentile. So, he always made a bee line to the synagogue. For if there were any believers, they would be there, not in the pagan temples. And as a certified rabbi, he had an open invitation to these places. And it was easy to talk for him to talk about the coming Messiah Jesus. So, <sup>2</sup>*"As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue & on three Sabbath days he **reasoned with them** from the Scriptures, <sup>3</sup>explaining & proving that the Messiah had to suffer & rise from the dead."*

You see when he got to the Temple, he reasoned with them. He talked with them, argued, discussed, instructed them from the Scriptures. This was common ground for both the Jew and the Christian. God's revelation about himself. God's interaction with the world. God's choosing of Israel. God's promise of a coming Saviour. So Paul took them to the OT.

Slide 4

Because the heart of Paul's message was Jesus. Not their own felt needs. Not the Church. But Jesus. And so for three weeks in a row, he talked about Jesus. His birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension. He pointed how each of these things were foretold by the Scriptures. Because in the words of preacher Don Everts *"There was something so clear and beautiful and true and unique and powerful about Jesus that old rabbis marvelled at his teaching, young children would run and sit on his lap, ashamed prostitutes would find themselves weeping at his feet, and whole villages would gather to hear him speak, experts in the law would find themselves speechless and people from the poor to the rugged working class to the unbelievably wealthy would leave everything... and follow him."*

Slide 5

If you were to ask someone at Thessalonica what Paul spoke most about, they would say, Jesus. These men who turned the world upside down had a message about Jesus. The book of Acts tells us they reasoned with the people of Thessalonica & it uses the same word when they came also to Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Troas & even before the Roman governor Felix.

Friends if we want to turn the world upside down again, this is the place to start. Because Jesus is the one who turned our world upside down, didn't he? He is the one who has changed everything. Our past has been forgiven, our present is about serving him and our future is about enjoying what he has won for us on the cross. At times we will lose confidence in the Church, in our fellow Christians, even in our own walk with God but Jesus, Jesus will never let us down. And Paul's reasoning leads to a response in Thessalonica.

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<sup>4</sup>*"Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks & quite a few prominent women. <sup>5</sup>But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city."* Which meant that Paul was eventually driven out of town. It was not a long ministry but an effective one. And Paul writes two letters to them in the days to come.

Slide 7

## 2. Reasoned, Received (verses 10-15)

<sup>10</sup>*"As soon as it was night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. <sup>11</sup>Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for **they received** the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."*

Here we see the next strategy to change the world. The speaker must keep talking about Jesus from the Scriptures and the hearers need to receive that message and keep going back to Jesus and the Scriptures. For with the Bereans, we have a model, a paradigm of how the Christian community should operate. For they receive the word, they research the word and they also examined the word.

Slide 8

Today we have various tv programmes and websites that fact check. That look into the claims of others and see if they are really true. And the Church should be filled with fact checkers as well. People who will check what they are hearing is truly the gospel. Who will chase up the Scriptural references. Who will not just believe anything that is put before them. Who will not believe every Christian who writes a book, preaches a sermon or puts a post on the internet. Friends, we are to be like the Bereans.

For their belief was not a superficial one. When they believed they didn't throw away their brains or their Bibles. Now it is easy to fall for the latest theological fad. We can get caught up in the hype of what is happening all around us. In fact, I believe one of the great sins of Christians today is that we too readily accept popular distortions to the Christian faith.

But please notice that when the Bereans heard Paul preach, they also received it with great eagerness. There was a spirit of learning amongst them. An enthusiasm to know the truth. They didn't go to worship each week because they had to or out of a sense of duty, they wanted to know God. They wanted to grow in their knowledge of God. They were eager to put into practise what they were learning.

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So how do we put this sort of attitude into practise? Because let's be honest here, not every sermon that we hear at Church is a world changer. Some are repeating old truths. Others are a bit academic. Or a bit dull. Compared to what you can get on the internet, some really are second rate. So how can you and I eagerly respond to the word of God each week?

Maybe by praying for all of us before you come to Church. That the Holy Spirit would take God's word and apply it to all of our hearts. And by picking up a Bible and following what is being said. Maybe by taking some notes to keep your concentration going. Fact checking what is being said from the Bible. Talking with people after the service. Putting down the relevant application to our lives and revisiting it later on in the week to see if it has made any difference. Maybe even watching it a second time on YouTube during the week.

Slide 10

Again in Berea, there was a mixed response. <sup>12</sup> "As a result, many of them believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women & many Greek men. <sup>13</sup> But when the Jews in Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching the word of God at Berea, some of them went there too, agitating the crowds & stirring them up. <sup>14</sup> The believers immediately sent Paul to the coast, but Silas & Timothy stayed at Berea."

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Sam Chan, a Sydney evangelist, talks about how the gospel is growing in Australia today mainly amongst Asian immigrants but not White Aussies because people with an Asian background see the gospel of Jesus as good news because it releases them from guilt and shame while white Aussies hear it as bad news because it restricts them from doing what they think is living their best life. He says that the gospel of the Lord Jesus is good news for all people but we do need package it in different ways to reach many different audiences.

Now when we look at the response to Paul's preaching, we see that Jews responded, Greeks responded, women responded, even the elites responded. And I think we are going to see why that was the case in our next section of Acts. It is because Paul had the one message Jesus but he had a number of different starting points. With each group he found a different point of contact. A different bridge that he could build between them & the Lord. And once he built that bridge, he encouraged his hearers to cross that

bridge by pointing them toward Jesus. That is a model that you and I need to follow as we witness to Jesus today.

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### 3. Reasoned, Received, Resurrection.

So, let's look at the case study of how Paul witnessed to the non-Christians of his day. Because when he arrived in Athens, we see two worlds colliding. Jerusalem and Athens. Pagan vs Christian thought. And to help us understand Paul, I want us to firstly see

a. **What Paul saw.** <sup>16</sup> *"While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols."* Now many people have gone to Athens as a tourist because of the sheer splendour of the city's architecture, history and wisdom. But Paul doesn't write a travel blog about finally getting to see the famous Pantheon, instead what he sees is a city full of idols. He sees a city full of religious activity. He sees thousands of different gods. But the sees the Athenians didn't know the one and only true God.

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b. **(What Paul felt).** And that distressed Paul. Or as other translations put it, 'outraged him', 'revolted him', 'provoked him.' It broke his heart. God, the true God was not being worshipped in this place. Created things were being put in the spot where the Creator of all things should be. Which meant that everyone in this city was going to come under God's righteous judgement. And that sickened him.

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But I wonder if we visited Athens today or even if we visited Central Newcastle or Sydney or New York today, would we have the same reaction? Michael Green puts it this way, *"It broke Paul's heart to see the city captive to idolatry. At once we notice how different Paul is from us. We are surrounded by various forms of idolatry – worship of fame, sex, money, power and it does not bother us. **We have lost the ability to care.**"*

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Friends when you go for a walk and pass by the huge houses that we live in do we see that for many of us our homes are idols? When we go and play sport on a Saturday afternoon are we grieved that for most of the participants sport is their idol? When we go to work are we grieved by those who have made money an idol? When we go to the park, are we cut to the heart that many people are putting their family as an idol? When we turn on the internet are we appalled at all the false gods that appear before our very eyes?

I think the reason we are not great at witnessing to others about Jesus is we are not moved by the sin and idolatry that is all around us. Friends, God is not getting the glory he deserves. He is not being worshipped and put number 1 in people's lives. And that should distress us.

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As missionary Henry Martin once put it, *"I could not endure existence if Jesus was not glorified, it would be hell to me, if he was always ... dishonoured."* Friends as believers our hearts should ache and eyes blur at what is going on all around us. And what Paul sees and what Paul felt led next to

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c. **What Paul did.** <sup>17</sup> *So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.* <sup>18</sup> *A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus & the resurrection.* <sup>19</sup> *Then they took him & brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus."*

Paul does three things in particular. He goes to the religious Jews and reasoned there with anyone who will dialogue with him. And then he goes to market and debates with anyone who wanted to debate with him. And then he goes to Mars Hill and philosophises with anyone who will philosophise with him. Paul is all things to all men in order to win some.

If we were following Paul's example then you and I would find ourselves in Church, discussing Jesus with those who believe and with those who are open to believing. We might also find ourselves in parks, city squares, shopping centres, pubs and cafes finding ways and means to talk with our friends, families and neighbours about the things that interest them, always looking to build a bridge from them to Jesus.

And we would be at our universities, on the internet and being equipped to go into politics, the media or the arts so that we can find new and effective ways of telling the world about the good news of Jesus. We would be finding old ways and new to take God's unchanging word to an ever-changing world. But how exactly did Paul do this? Let's take a look at

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d. **What Paul said.** *"People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup> For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So, you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you."*

Paul found common ground with his audience. He couldn't say to the philosophers on Mars Hill let's open up our Bibles at Genesis 1:1 and there we will see that the Lord is our Creator. No, they didn't have the Jewish Scriptures in front of them. And they wouldn't believe them even if they did! What they do have in front of them is thousands of temples and altars and idols. Even a catch all place of worship, to an unknown god. Just in case all the others were wrong this was their insurance policy. We will worship an unknown god, just in case!

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Paul tells them this unknown God has made himself known in creation. God's world is a revelation to every single person alive as to the greatness of God. <sup>24</sup> *"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands."* Of course. God doesn't live in Temples. How could a man-made building possibly do anything but belittle the God who made the entire heavens and the earth.

During the French Revolution, the leaders of this movement wanted to remove everything that pointed people toward a belief in God. Get rid of Churches. Get rid of Bibles. Get rid of congregations. But the Christians would reply *"'Yes, but you cannot rip the stars from the night sky.' For the heavens declare the glory of God."*

Paul tells his hearers that God is the Creator of the Universe and that he is the Sustainer of Life. <sup>25</sup> *"And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else."* God doesn't need anything from us. But we are dependent upon the good things he provides for us in this world.

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God is also the Sovereign over the whole universe. <sup>26</sup> *"From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us."* God is not watching us from a distance as the philosophers thought. He is intimately involved with us.

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In fact, he is the source of all life. <sup>28</sup> *"For in him we live and move and have our being."* As some of your own poets have said, *"We are his offspring."* <sup>29</sup> *"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill."* Imagine that. God is our father. He fashioned us, he gave us this world because he likes to give good gifts to his children.

And notice Paul hasn't quoted one Bible verse as yet, even though what he is saying is thoroughly biblical. But now he quotes two local poets. Once again, he is taking his hearers from the familiar to the unfamiliar. From their own world to God's world. And once he has done that, he calls them to repent because God is their judge.

Slide 22 <sup>30</sup>"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup>For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

Now he doesn't say the name Jesus but he talks about Jesus & specifically Jesus' resurrection. This is where Paul is heading. This is the destination of all of Paul's preaching and teaching. Because the key person in the Christian faith is Christ. The key aspect of our belief is Jesus' death and resurrection. And if we are going to repent of our old life we must now believe in a new way, and follow Jesus Christ as Lord.

What Paul has done is given the Athenians a crash course in theology. He is pointing them to the God that can now know. But notice at every point Paul maximises God and minimises mankind and that is because the crowd that he is talking to people who maximised mankind at every point and minimised god. So Paul doesn't end where everyone else ends, your own good works. But points them to Jesus and his grace. Jesus is the God shaped hole that is in the heart of all mankind. And you and I need to repent from our sins and come to Jesus.

Slide 23

I started our time together by talking about ideas that have turned the world upside down. And the Christian gospel is one of those ideas, what I believe is the greatest of all ideas. But in recent times it has been trashed in the Western world. It is seen as life denying. Old fashioned. Outdated. Out of touch. And I see many of us Christians getting angry about it. And we want to jump up and down and tell people they are wrong. And write letters to politicians. And support political movements. And try and shout louder because our voice is not being heard. But instead, I think we need to be like the apostle Paul we need to reason with the people around us. Debate with them, listen to them and talk to them about Jesus.

And we need to receive Jesus ourselves. Not be fooled by false teaching. Not find ourselves down every Christian rabbit hole. But we are to be solid, really solid on the things of faith. And we need to see what is going on all around us and be moved by what is happened and hurt because God's honour is being trashed and then we need to reach out in love, like Paul reached out in love. Find common ground. Talk about the things that are going on all around us. And bit by bit move the conversation to Jesus. And the resurrection. The things that are unique to the Christian faith. But we need to make sure that both our message and tone is honest and gracious. And that our words and our lives are pointing people to Jesus Christ.

## Song – Yet not I but Christ in me

[CityAlight - Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me \(Lyrics\) - YouTube](#)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1. What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer<br/>There is no more for heaven now to give<br/>He is my joy, my righteousness, and freedom<br/>My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace<br/>To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus<br/>For my life is wholly bound to His<br/>Oh how strange and divine,<br/>I can sing, "All is mine"<br/>Yet not I, but through Christ in me</p> | <p>3. No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven<br/>The future sure, the price it has been paid<br/>For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon<br/>And He was raised to overthrow the grave<br/>To this I hold, my sin has been defeated<br/>Jesus now and ever is my plea<br/>Oh the chains are released,<br/>I can sing, "I am free"<br/>Yet not I, but through Christ in me</p> |
|--|---|

2. The night is dark but I am not forsaken  
For by my side, the Saviour He will stay  
I labour on in weakness and rejoicing  
For in my need, His power is displayed  
To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me  
Through the deepest valley He will lead  
Oh the night has been won,  
and I shall overcome  
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

4. With every breath I long to follow Jesus  
For He has said that He will bring me home  
And day by day I know He will renew me  
Until I stand with joy before the throne  
To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus  
All the glory evermore to Him  
When the race is complete,  
still my lips shall repeat  
Yet not I, but through Christ in me

## Benediction.

<sup>24</sup> "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. <sup>25</sup> And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup> From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup> God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. <sup>28</sup> 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' (Acts 17:24-28)