

“Seek God” (Acts 17:16–34)(6.14.20)

Acts 17:16–34 (ESV)

¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbler wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

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

“ ‘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.’

²⁹ Being 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. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because 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.”

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

The word of God for the people of God.

Title: **“Seek God”**

LET US PRAY.

INTRODUCTION:

Reverend Thomas Lambrecht is an ordained elder in the UMC and Vice President of an organization called Good News. Since 1967, Good News has been the classical evangelical witness and ministry for renewal and reform within The United Methodist Church. Their mission is to lead all people within The United Methodist Church to the faithful and vibrant practice of orthodox Wesleyan Christianity. Good News is Centered on Christ, Faithful to the Scriptures, and Committed to the Kingdom. Here is an excerpt from an email he sent out on Friday.

“We may be at such a crisis point right now. In fact, we are beset by a health crisis with the Coronavirus pandemic, an economic crisis with the worst downturn since the Great Depression, and a societal crisis in coming to grips with the evil of racism. Any one of these crises would be challenging enough to deal with on its own. Addressing all three crises at the same time puts us in a situation of “biblical proportions.”

We can count on the fact that God is with us in the midst of these crises. Not only that, but God is ready to act on our behalf in the midst of these crises. As Moses encouraged the Israelites on the shores of the

Red Sea, "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. ... The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still" (Exodus 14:13-14). We can look first and foremost to what God is doing in the midst of our crisis. Through prayer we can relinquish our need to be in control and allow ourselves to rest in God's presence and the assurance of his activity on our behalf." My friends, as chaos seems to abound, and the Father of Lies is still prince of this world, I take comfort in the sovereignty of God. The Lord is still in control and the Lord is still involved in the lives of His children. God ordained government for the good of the people. God rules the nations, even while rebellion rages in many spheres of our planet.

In these trying times, I feel that as a prophet of God, I need to be bold. At the same time every child of God is called to be humble. How do I reconcile these two seemingly conflicting callings? Listen to Paul as he comes to terms with this dilemma in Ephesians 3:8–12 (ESV)

⁸To me, though **I am the very least of all the saints**, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, ⁹and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, ¹⁰so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom **we have boldness** and access with confidence through our faith in him.

BODY:

The Apostle Paul finds himself alone in a foreign city: Athens, Greece. As he explores the city, he sees the great need for God Almighty.

- Paul was Provoked in his spirit.
 - Hear what Peter says about Lot who was living in Sodom in 2 Peter 2:8 (ESV) (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard);
 - Today, I am provoked in my spirit:
 - The corrupted church
 - The politicizing of every issue
 - The Devil's promoting isolation
 - Evil is called good and good is called evil
 - There is great opposition to truth.
 - The sophistication of propaganda and deception
 - Lincoln Memorial defacing
 - Deepfake video
 - Where do we find truth? God's word!!
- Idolatry:
 - John was telling me that he was asking Google if he believed in God, but couldn't get an answer. Finally, he asked Google if it was God and Google replied yes.
 - It turns out that there is a Church of Google, a **satirical** religious organization: 'We at the Church of Google believe the search engine Google is the closest humankind has ever come to directly experiencing an actual God (as typically defined). We believe there is much more evidence in favour of Google's divinity than there is for the divinity of other more traditional gods.'
 - PROOF #1: Google is the closest thing to an Omniscient (all-knowing) entity in existence, which can be scientifically verified. She indexes over 9.5 billion WebPages, which is more than any other search engine on the web today. Not only is Google the closest known entity to being Omniscient, but She also sorts through this vast amount of knowledge using Her patented PageRank technology, organizing said data and making it easily accessible to us mere mortals.

- PROOF #9: Evidence of Google's existence is abundant. There is more evidence for the existence of Google than any other God worshiped today. Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence. If seeing is believing, then surf over to www.google.com and experience for yourself Google's awesome power. No faith required.
 - Self (take up your mirror instead of a cross)
 - Your idols determine how you see the world. They establish your values. Think of them as a lens. There are different filters.
 - Politics seems to be a primary idol in our country
 - Safety and Security: Locking the hangar doors, but no one would ever get rescued. Mission fails.
 - Money
 - Power – Isn't that behind a lot of what is happening? Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely
- Paul deliberately engaged people in order to share the good news of Jesus.
 - Where
 - Synagogue (Places of religion)
 - Marketplace (Daily living)
 - Areopagus (Public debate)
 - Who
 - Jews
 - Converts to Judaism
 - Epicureans were known for pursuing contentment, denying that the gods were involved in human life.
 - Stoics were known for controlling the passions through reason and discipline, thereby cultivating a virtuous life.
 - Common folk
 - Mars Hill Community
- The issue of their response: Only some believed. Dionysius, Damaris, and others with them
- The Unknown God: Is God known in our day?
 - Paul proclaims the God who put a yearning in every human heart. Preacher Principal Fairbairn called this yearning divine homesickness.
 - The Creator needs nothing from us
 - But the Creator is the source of everything for us
 - And he [the unknown God] 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,
 - For what purpose? Why was each of us created?
- Every person is To Seek God our Creator
 - It is the desire of God's heart that we seek Him: **1 Chronicles 16:11 (NIV84)** Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. **Psalm 14:2 (NIV84)** The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. **Hebrews 11:6 (NIV84)** And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
 - God calls people to seek Him: **Isaiah 55:6–7 (NIV84)** Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. **Amos 5:4–6 (NIV84)** This is what the Lord says to the house of Israel: "Seek me and

- live; do not seek Bethel, do not go to Gilgal, do not journey to Beersheba. For Gilgal will surely go into exile, and Bethel will be reduced to nothing.” **Seek the Lord and live**, or he will sweep through the house of Joseph like a fire; it will devour, and Bethel will have no one to quench it.
- The Prince of Preachers, Charles Spurgeon told this story: “I read in the Life of John Wesley a story of Methodists meeting in a barn, and how certain of the villagers, who were afraid to break through the door, resolved to place one inside who would open the door to them during the service, that they might disturb the congregation. This person went in before service began, and concealed himself in a sack in a corner of the barn. When the Methodists began to sing, he liked the tune so well that he would not get out of the sack till he had heard it through. Then followed a prayer, and during that prayer, God worked on the man in the sack, so that he began to cry for mercy. The good people looked around, and were astonished to find a sinner in a sack seeking his Saviour.”
 - When we are saved through faith in Jesus we are gifted with **eyes of faith** so that we can actually see the hand of God working all around us. He TRULY is NEAR.
 - Proverbs 8:17 (NIV84) God says, “I love those who love me, and **those who seek me find me.**”
 - Jeremiah 29:11–14 (NIV84) For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the Lord, “and will bring you back from captivity.”

CONCLUSION:

- Yes, we are God’s offspring. Everyone one of us.
- Like a fish lives in water, we live in our God.
- In God’s love and patience and forbearance He overlooked our ignorance.
- Repent now for the resurrected Jesus will judge us on the designated date.
- Find comfort in God’s presence. Find comfort in God’s sovereignty. Find comfort in the peace that is beyond understanding.

I need thee every hour, most gracious Lord;
no tender voice like thine can peace afford.

Jesus promises peace. John 14:27 (ESV)

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me,
still all my song shall be,

nearer, my God, to thee;

nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Seek your God continuously, for in Him, you live and move and have your being. Seek God in order to know God.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.