

GLENWOOD COMMUNITY CHURCH

August 30, 2020

The Wisdom of God is Wiser than Wise Men

Acts 17:1-33

Pastor Paul A. Jackson

Alex:

Hey, good morning everybody. I can see your friendly faces hiding behind those masks, some of them cleverly woven. And good morning everybody at home, who is watching us on the interweb. Welcome to Glenwood Church. My name is Alex, sharing the platform with Bradley this morning. We're going to just enter this morning and do a time of worship and praise. A few weeks ago Ben asked me to lead while he took a well-needed, much-deserved break. And I was really troubled in my spirit. I know this might come as a surprise to you, but we have had a few things going on the last few months. And it really required me to come and focus in on my reason for being here, not only that God created us to worship, but that He wants our praise. He doesn't need our praise, but He wants a relationship with us, He wants relationship with you. And so, years ago when I was going through a similar time of being overwhelmed in Haiti, the Holy Spirit brought to mind Psalm 46:10. I'm going to read Psalm 46 for you this morning, just to set our minds and our heart before the Lord, prepare them.

Psalm 46: God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, He will not fail; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; He lifts his voice, the earth melts. The LORD Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob our fortress. Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations He has brought on the earth. He

makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; He breaks the bow and shatters the spear, He burns the shields with fire. He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

That's such a great assurance we have in Him. This is not a surprise to God, I want to let you know.

[music: "Behold Him"]

Ben Cunningham:

Well, good morning, Glenwood family. Good to be with you, and welcome to those of you who are joining us online, we're glad you are with us. We are here to behold him. Just a couple of brief announcements.

One, if you brought a gift this morning and you're here, there are some boxes in the foyer that you can place those in, or you can give online later on.

We wanted to let you know about an opportunity coming up in the fall for discipleship. There's lots of things that God has been moving among the people of Glenwood to do, starting in the fall, and so we're excited about those things. God has designed the body to grow through the network of support of relationships, that's how He set it up. And so not only are we being transformed, but we're also participating in the transformation of other people. And so that's what we're going to lean into this fall, that is how we're going to push towards discipleship in a lot of different contexts, and change up some formats for what we're doing. So we're excited to announce the following. And I am going to list these off rapid fire, but I'll help you know how to get more information at the end, okay?

The first thing we want to let you know about is our youth and young adult ministries. They're going to be kicking off with an all-group, onsite meeting on

September 8th and 9th, and then they'll continue in gatherings of max of five for the rest of the month. So that's September 8th and 9th.

Women's Bible study, that's Monday nights and Tuesday mornings, that's going to kick off September 14th and 15th, with a Jen Wilkin's study on the book of Hebrews. That should be great. That's going to be on Zoom.

Next, new and existing life groups are going to be starting up in a couple weeks, and there's even a group for those of you who may be newer to Glenwood, we're forming a group just to help you connect. And we've got Zoom formats for that, we have in-person formats up to five people for that; we've kind of adjusted for what's going on and with Covid.

And last, but not least, we have what we're calling discipleship groups, kind of a new thing that God is doing, where we're going to basically connect people who are hungry to either help disciple others or be disciplined by another person.

And so the way that you can find out more about those things, or sign up for those things, or get in connection with the ministry director, is by going on our website. It's listed up there, glenwoodcc.org/discipleship. Feel like, "that's a lot of information, where would I go to hear more?" That's where you'd go, to the website, or you can ask a ministry director this morning if you have more questions. But we're really excited about what God is doing in the fall, and the ability to flex and to disciple one another in person as we're able. So, be praying for those things.

Let's go ahead and go to the Lord in prayer as we continue on with our worship.
Let's pray.

Heavenly Father. We begin this morning with a posture of praise. You are in control, and You are still very much at work, God, and we delight and rest in knowing that. You are generous and wise, and You are generous with Your wisdom, so we continue to ask for it. But we confess that we don't know all the ways that you, our

Master Builder, are working in this season, but we know from your Word and from experience that You never waste circumstances. We believe that You have placed each person where they live and when they live. So give us a forward looking faith for such a time as this. Lord, thank You for directing our elders, the board, ministry leaders, and staff in this season. We pray for our leadership team, as the apostle Paul prayed in Colossians 1, that they would be strengthened with all power according to Your glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy. God, thank You for directing our church towards discipleship in this season. Give us creativity in connecting with each other, and help us to initiate, when it would be easier to sit back. God, You have designed us to grow together, so would You help us to invest in the opportunities that are in front of us and not to wait for what was normal. Save us from the wasteland of complaint and what-if's. Amidst a discouraged and divided world, we as Your people can find encouragement and unity in the body of Christ. Make us a contrast from the world. We pray for the ministries of praise and preaching this morning. We thank You for the chance to be shaped again. We know that Your fixed day of perfect judgement is coming, so we pray for a Borean-like hunger for Your word, and that those who are seeking You would find their way to You this morning. We pray these things in Christ's name and for His sake. Amen.

[music: "Your Grace Finds Me"]

[music: "Build My Life"]

Pastor Paul:

Good morning. If you would take your Bibles and open to the book of Acts, Acts 17. Today, I want to talk about our heart's desire, because whatever our hearts desire will govern what we do today and tomorrow and the day after that.

When I was in college, I took a class in Greek and Roman philosophy, and the professor assigned us to read in its entirety Plato's *Republic*. Plato's *Republic*: the

book still sits on my shelf. It's like a trophy from a past life, and it's one of those two-handed books in that it takes both hands to hold it up, and you can't stand like this - I mean some of you big guys probably could - But I remember when I cracked it open. I'm just this kid and I think, "Okay, I have to read this whole book." But the real question is, "Do I have to understand this whole book?" But the bigger question, even than that, is, "Does anyone understand what Plato wrote?" Well, Socrates probably did, because Socrates was Plato's teacher. And Aristotle, he might have understood Plato, because Plato taught Aristotle. And Aristotle had a student who might've understood him, who was a megalomaniac named Alexander the Great, who wanted to conquer the world, and he almost succeeded. At least he did that part of the empire, until many years later Rome would take the empire away from Greece; and Rome would rule, they would govern, they were in charge, they would wield the sword and you did what Rome wanted you to do. But Greece, and in particular the nerve center of Greece, the city of Athens - their ideas, their culture, their art, their inventions, their architecture, their buildings, their gods - governed the Roman empire.

We find ourselves this morning in the ancient country of Greece, eventually we're going to make our way to Athens. And if you were in Athens in the first century and you walked into the city and you saw it in all of its glory and majesty and wonder and splendor, you would see architecture that is designed to house the gods they worshipped. It says if - in Athens they created a god to meet every desire -so if you have some kind of desire, some kind of an ambition, that over the centuries they invented this god that would do what you wanted, that would meet your needs. So walking into ancient Athens is kind of like watching a modern-day Marvel movie, except without Spider-man. The names seem to cross over, and they seem to be familiar. Names like Apollo and Athena and Jupiter and Venus and Mercury and Bacchus and Neptune and Diana and all the gods and goddesses of Olympus. But if you were to visit Athens today you would visit a boneyard. You would visit the skeletal remnant remains of a once phenomenally majestic culture. The center of Athens is the Acropolis, which is this huge flat-topped rock on which these majestic buildings were constructed. And down at the bottom of it is a place called the Areopagus, which we know as Mars Hill. And when you stand at Mars Hill and look

up at the Acropolis, even today you can see the silhouettes of these majestic buildings.

This morning we find the apostle Paul as we track with him, first in Thessalonica, then in Barea, eventually in Athens. And in Athens he's at Mars Hill, and looming above him are all of these buildings that the Greeks constructed to house their gods. Paul is going to tell the people in Thessalonica, in Barea, and Athens about God. He's going to tell them about the same God. And, as is his practice, he's going to first go into a synagogue where he's going to engage Jewish people from the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. It's what they are most familiar with. It's the Scriptures they know and the Scriptures they say they love. And he's going to tell the Jewish people about the Messiah they're looking for, they're waiting for. He's going to tell them who the Messiah is; he's going to disclose it to them; he's going to tell them of Jesus. Then he's going to go into this pagan region full of philosophers and really high intellects and he's going to tell them about the God they're looking for. In both cases he's going to tell the audience who they're looking for, but he's going to use their language and their culture and their literature and their written words and their oral history. He's going to step into that, and he's going to connect it; he's going to show how this is all fulfilled in and through Jesus Christ. We've been tracking with the apostle Paul. Here we find him explaining to different cultures the same Jesus, and he explains to them the God that they are looking for.

What do we know about the God we are looking for? Well, in Acts 17, first we know this, in verses 2-4: Jesus is the Messiah who fulfilled God's ancient promise. So we find Paul has left Phillipi where he had been released from prison, for being wrongfully imprisoned, wrongfully beaten by the magistrates. They let Paul out of jail, and then Paul leaves Phillippi, and he goes to another Greek city, and that's Thessalonica. And we read these words in verses 2 and 3. *"And according to Paul's custom, he went to them,"*--this is Thessalonica--*"for three Sabbaths, reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying 'This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.'* And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul

and Silas along with a large number of God-fearing Greeks and a number of the leading women." Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. God promised His people a Savior who would rescue Israel. And they thought that the Savior, this Messiah who would rescue Israel, would return her to national glory and freedom from oppressors so that they could worship God in peace. God is faithful to His people. He did what He promised. He sent the Messiah. The Messiah fulfilled all of the Old Testament Scriptures.

And when Paul told them of Jesus, he showed them. He showed them from the Scriptures that they loved so much about the God who loved them even more. He could've shared passages like Psalm 22:16, which anticipates the cross of Jesus, "*A band of evildoers has encompassed me, they pierced my hands and my feet.*" Or Psalm 22:18, "*They divide my garments among them and for my clothing they cast lots.*" Paul could've opened to Psalm 22 and said, "This is talking about Messiah. This is talking about Jesus." They had no category for a suffering Messiah, but here it is, right in Psalm 22, suffering Messiah. In Isaiah 53:6, he could have quoted, "He was pierced through for our transgressions." He could've spoken of the Passover, the Passover lamb, the words of John the Baptist. "Passover Lamb who comes to take away the sin of the world." This speaks of Jesus. He could've given his own story, he could've said, "I didn't believe in Him. I persecuted Him, and then He appeared to me. I saw Him. He revealed, He disclosed Himself to me." Jesus Christ had to die. He had to die because of us. He had to live the life that we can't live, and He did, without sin. He died the death that sin deserves so that those with faith in Jesus Christ, we don't die; we live. We live right now a forgiven life, and we live with Christ one day, a forever life.

So he explains to the people in the synagogue, and some of these people believed him. Other people got really mad at him, and they tried to chase him out of town, and so he left. He was sent out of town by the believers, and he went onto his next stop, which was Barea. And the Bareaans, they had a hunger for God's word. And so when they had a guy come in like Paul, they listened to him. And they did then what all of us should do today, and that is, when somebody stands up and claims to speak for God, well you want to compare what they say to what God has already

said, so the Bereans did. And some of the Bereans came to know Christ; they became followers of Christ. And then this group of angry people from Thessalonica, they follow him to Berea. This mob comes into town, and so the believers send Paul out of town so quickly they couldn't make travel arrangements for Paul's whole team. So we pick up the account in verses 14 and 15. *"Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as far as the sea, and Silas and Timothy remained there. Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens, and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left."*

Here he is; he's alone. He is alone in ancient Athens. He requests that his team come as soon as possible. I can imagine him walking the city. I have walked the city. I can imagine him reading inscriptions on buildings and majestic works of art. One ancient writer says of Athens, "It was easier in Athens to find a god than to find a man." Do a 360, same writer said that in Athens there was a forest of idols. We know what Paul saw. We know what he felt. And we know what he said about what he saw and felt. And that tells us so much about the God that the human heart, each of us, long for, that we find and experience only in and through Jesus Christ - that any other ultimate desire is an idol that pretends to be god and that functions in our life as a god, but that is not God and incapable of doing what God has done, is doing, and will do.

What can we tell about the God we are looking for? Well, secondly, God alone is worthy of our worship. God alone is worthy of our worship. So we read in verses 16-23. And verse 16, *"Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him, as he was observing the city full of idols."* He is provoked. It is not a happy experience. It is an intense, emotional, negative reaction to what he saw. He saw a *"city full of idols."* He saw a city full of construction, sculpture, artwork that claimed to be God, but that diminished the One True God. And the problem with diminishing the One True God is that, when we do so, we do so to the hurt of ourselves and to others, to the hurt of their own life, a life in which people remained trapped in sin, left on their own apart from God. Human intellect and imagination cannot solve humanity's greatest problem. Why was he provoked? Perhaps because of Isaiah 42:8. *"I am the Lord, that is My*

name, I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images." What was the original sin? To reach for glory, to be as God. To eat from this tree of knowledge of good and evil, which is the naming of righteousness and immorality, and that is God's prerogative alone. So that's what he felt. What did he do?

Well, first he went to the synagogue, and he reasoned with them. Verse 17, "*So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and God-fearing Gentiles and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be present.*" So, as was his practice, first he goes to the synagogue, and though it doesn't say here what he did in the synagogue other than reason with them, perhaps even with the Socratic method, perhaps question following question that helps the listener to think, and interactive dialogue between a leader and a group. Perhaps he did that. But we know the substance; we know the substance on the basis of what follows and on the basis of what he had said each time he went into the synagogue just as he did in Thessalonica. That he explained who Jesus is, is Messiah who had to suffer and who had to die, so let's worship God through him right now while we still can.

So he goes to the marketplace, and in the marketplace he meets two groups of philosophers that are still famous today. Verse 18, "*And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, 'What would this idle babbler wish to say?' Others, 'He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,' because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.*" The Epicureans believe that gods were remote and could care less about this world, that this world is random, that there's no life after death, that when a person dies they die, they cease to exist. And so their life verse was, "Live now, before you die, because that's it. Make the most of the life that you have, enjoy it to the fullest, do whatever is your heart's desire." It was a sensate religion that fulfilled the ambitions and imaginations and desires of the human heart. The other group actually has gotten popular. There's been a re-emergence of it; some of their books are best-sellers on the New York Times list. And that was the Stoics. Stoicism. God is in everyone and everything. Stoics believed that you're to live in harmony with reason and with each other, and that in all ways you pull yourself up by your own bootstraps because you're sufficient in everything. You're master of your life and of your fate, and if it

hurts: that's life. Pain is something to be endured, not something to hinder us from doing what we want to do in our life.

So there are two responses that these philosophers have to Paul's words. The first response is they dismissed him. He is a babbler. Literally, "seed picker," as he picks a little seed from this thought and little seed from this bush, and he is a jack-of-all-trades and a master-of-none. He thinks he knows something, but he does not know what we know. He's a babbler. Others, they were intrigued. They had never heard about a category of resurrection. They had never heard of this Jesus. So, in their intrigue and in their interest, they invite him, they take him to the Areopagus. And the Areopagus is Mars Hill, right below the Acropolis, from which you see these majestic buildings and works of art. And there he appeared before the council who governed the city, who had authority over cultural and religious and intellectual and artistic affairs. And there they bring him before the council.

But before we read what he says to the council, I want you to turn with me to I Corinthians 1, because there we see Paul writing to another Greek city, to a church in ancient Corinth, and we see how he communicates the Gospel of Jesus to Jews and how he communicates to Greeks and what each culture valued and what the cross of Jesus says to both. So, in I Corinthians 1, beginning in verse 20, "*Where is the wise man, where is the scribe?*" Stop. First question. Who is wise? Well the Greeks were wise. Who is the scribe? Well, he would be from the Jewish world. "*Where is the debater of this age? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well pleased with the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believed.*" Remember what they said of Paul? "You babbler." They think Paul is foolish, and in thinking he was foolish they themselves proved to be foolish. Verse 22, "*For indeed, Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom.*" What did he do in Thessalonica? He tried to prove to them that Jesus is the Messiah, that Jesus had to suffer, that he's raised from the dead. So he tried to prove it from the Old Testament Scriptures, and he could prove it from his own relational encounter with the risen Jesus. So even the Jews during Jesus' day, they

say, "Give us a sign; show us." So sign after sign after sign, and they still say, "Give us a sign. Prove who you are, that you're the son of God." So they look for signs. But the Greeks, they search for wisdom. They want to know everything that there is to know about the world.

Paul says in verse 23, "*But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and Gentiles foolishness.*" So the stumbling block. There are Jews who when they hear that Jesus is the Messiah, fulfills the Old Testament, they say, "No. I can't deal with that," and they end up rejecting Jesus Christ. And there are others who think, "I'm not even going to listen to that." The Greeks. "This doesn't make sense. We've never heard of resurrection. That's impossible." Contrast, verse 24, "*To those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks--*" Now we're talking about believers from the world of Jews and the believers from the world of Greeks. "*--Christ the power of God--*" He is power of God in that He does what only God can do in saving us and forgiving of our sin, "*--and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*" What does all that mean? It means this. Jesus Christ - there is so much more complexity to Jesus Christ and to God than there is to Plato. There is so much more that is beyond our comprehension, our thought processes. If God had so intended, He could've laid it on us. And even without the Spirit of God we can't even understand what God has revealed of Himself now. What that means is that Jesus Christ, as complex as God is, Jesus is far more accessible than Plato. We can know God. We can know Him through this Jesus. That means we don't have to have a high intellect; we don't have to be brilliant; we don't have to know another language. Jesus is Word, who discloses God to us, and we can know God in and through Jesus Christ who died and who is raised from the dead.

So now we go back to Acts 17. And in Acts 17 Paul stands up and he begins his speech. And he says in verse 22, "*He stood in the midst of the Areopagus and he said, 'Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.'*" Well that's an understatement. I mean, you can't turn around without bumping into some statue, or some so-called god. But while he was looking through the city, we see what he saw in verse 23. "*For while I was passing through and examining the*

objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you." Wow. He says a lot. I mean, he says, "You guys have admitted that you don't know everything. And in your desire, or in your fear to make sure you cover all your bases, you try to name all these so-called gods, and then you got this one that kind of envelopes any and every other category of our own." And Paul calls it ignorance. At least they recognized their ignorance. At least they recognized they didn't know everything. That's one reason why Paul got a hearing. They had never heard anything like this. So he speaks of the God that they're looking for. I want to tell you about the God you're looking for and He is the God who's looking for you. Who is seeking you.

So he continues, he says, verse 24, *"The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands."* Oh. You see the Parthenon up there? God doesn't live in there. You see that temple to the goddess Nike? I mean, it's still there. God doesn't live there. All this stuff you created, God doesn't live in it. God created us in His image, and He created us to create and to procreate so that we can invent and create. And maybe, though it isn't said like this today, we would say people have invented an electric car, "Oh, that's amazing." We would say that people have planted a chip in the pig of a brain, like we saw last week, "That's amazing." As amazing as that is, it is but a shadow. It is but a small reflection of the God who created all that is. He is outside of us; He is independent of us. We, however, are dependent on Him.

Why does He create? *"He is not served by human hands,"* in verse 25, *"as though he needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things."* What can we discover about God in these verses? Third, God alone is uncreated. Verses 24-29, that's not going to go over very well with creative people. It's like Paul is saying, "You guys are really skilled and you are really brilliant, but the God who created us? Well, He doesn't need us, rather we need Him, because He gives us all good things," verse 25, so that we can serve and rightly should serve God with our hands. But the reason we serve is not because God is somehow incomplete without our service; He is complete within himself. He has chosen,

however, within Himself, to love us and to love generously and to love graciously. God alone is uncreated. He created Adam and Eve; He created us. So we see in chapter 17 that God the Creator created us, and that we *"would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from one of us, for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are his offspring.' Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man."*

We are created to reach for God. And when we reach for Him by faith in His Son Jesus Christ, we become who God envisioned us to be when He created us in the first place. Paul steps into their world of poetry and literature. He quotes one of their poets, that we are the offspring of God, literal children of God. There is this sense at which every human being, created in the image of God, is a child of God, as a part of the family of humanity. But there is a much narrower sense, in which when we confess our faith in Jesus Christ, Son of God, we become a daughter, a son of God, a child of God; we become part of God's family through faith in Jesus Christ. So he references God's creating us in His image, and then he tells us God is totally different than we are. Though in one sense we are like God, in another sense we are not God and, as we sang this morning, God is holy. He is other. He is beyond us, outside of us, makes Himself known through His creation, through His word, invites us to know Him through His Son; so when we reach for Him we find He has been looking for us, which is why He sent His Son Jesus Christ. So God alone is Uncreated.

What else can we discover about God here? God will openly judge the world that He invites to repent. God invites us to repent. Verse 30, *"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent."* So they didn't know of Jesus before that day; now they do. They know of who He is, and they are invited to repent--that means to turn to God by faith in Jesus Christ, to turn to God from the idols that get their hooks into the human heart. It is spoken of with clarity in Thessalonians 1:9-10, where God tells us to turn to God from idols. And when we turn to God, we turn our back on those

things that would take us away from God or diminish who God is in His rule and His reign in our life as our Lord and Savior. So He invites all to repent.

And then Paul explains why repentance is so crucial for every human heart. Verse 31, "*--because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.*" God has an appointment with you, with me, with each of us. And we may want to miss that appointment, but we won't. It's not our choice. He has chosen a day, an appointment, when He will judge every human thought, heart, person. Those who have faith in Jesus Christ, our sins were judged at the cross, so that we are forgiven of sin, so that we are in Christ. Jesus incurred our judgement. That's why it's so important to repent. Those who have faith--legit, heartfelt faith in this Jesus, forgiven of sin--He has incurred our judgement. Those who are outside of Christ--who have rejected Him, who have refused to repent--are left to account for their own sin. The One who judges is the only One who could rightfully judge. He is the one who died; He is the one who is raised from the dead, so that God, the Son Jesus Christ, is fully informed about everyone and everything, so that His judgement is not short of facts. His judgement is true, and His judgement is righteous, so that the risen Savior, Jesus Christ, will judge, account, all of us will account to Him.

So their response is revealed in verses 32-34, "*Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, 'We shall hear you again concerning this.'*" So if you work in a secular place, if you have interactions with people who don't share your faith in Jesus, then maybe you have experienced something like this. Maybe you have spoken with your lips what you've lived with your life, and you share your faith in Jesus with somebody that you know and somebody that you love. There is a response that is not an uncommon response, and it is a ridicule, a sneering. More than once in this passage Paul is ridiculed. But there's another response. Some of them heard and they followed Paul outside, or elsewhere, and they want to know more, "Tell us more about this Jesus." Verse 33, "*So Paul went out of their midst. But some men joined him and believed, among*

whom also were Dionysus the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them."

As it was in Athens, so it is today. Athens once as a country, and as a nation, and as an empire, experienced the glory of the Greek empire. They ruled and they reigned and they reveled in who they were and what they had accomplished, until Rome came along. And now Athens is a memory and something we learn about in the History of Western Civ., or a tourist destination, at least until recently. So it is today, that what lasts and what is eternal is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. That God, as Paul says in his sermon here, has appointed the nations and appointed the boundaries so that it's no accident that here we are in 2020, in Clark County, Southwest Washington, experiencing what we do and what we have. God's not surprised. He is sovereign over all; He is gracious in giving us life, and giving us breath, and giving us right now. But there is way more to life than right now. And if right now was what captivates us more than life with Him, then we have these idols that have gotten their hooks into us, and we need to pull out those hooks; we need to release those hooks. We need to turn to who He is. Even if we followed Him for much of our life, we need to turn back to who he is. We need to say "Yes" to Him; we need to trust Him fully. And He is the one who strengthens us, emboldens us, and He is the one with whom we will live forever. I hope you know Him, I hope you love Him.

Bow with me please.

God, thank You for being so much wiser than all of us. Thank You for humbling us in our own limitations and our awareness of what we don't know. Father, thank You that we do know You, and can know You through Jesus. Thank You for making Yourself understandable, for Your Spirit that opens our eyes and hearts, softens us to You. Help us to yield to You through your word and through Your Spirit. Help us to forgive as we have been forgiven, to love. Work in us. Show Your fingerprints of Your Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit: love and joy and peace and patience, kindness, gentleness, self-control. God, that You would show up in our world and our person, our life and our relationships and our homes and our neighborhoods and our city,

that we would be that candle that burns brightly in the dark, that we would be salt and we would be light, that we would be the aroma of life winsome and fragrant, pleasing, that reveals Your power working in us and Your wisdom in and through Your Son. Thank You for Jesus. In His name we pray. Amen.

Alex:

Would you stand with me, and we'll close. Respond to the Creator, everything the Uncreated One is, authorship of wisdom.

[music: "Be Thou My Vision"]