

## Acts 17:22-31

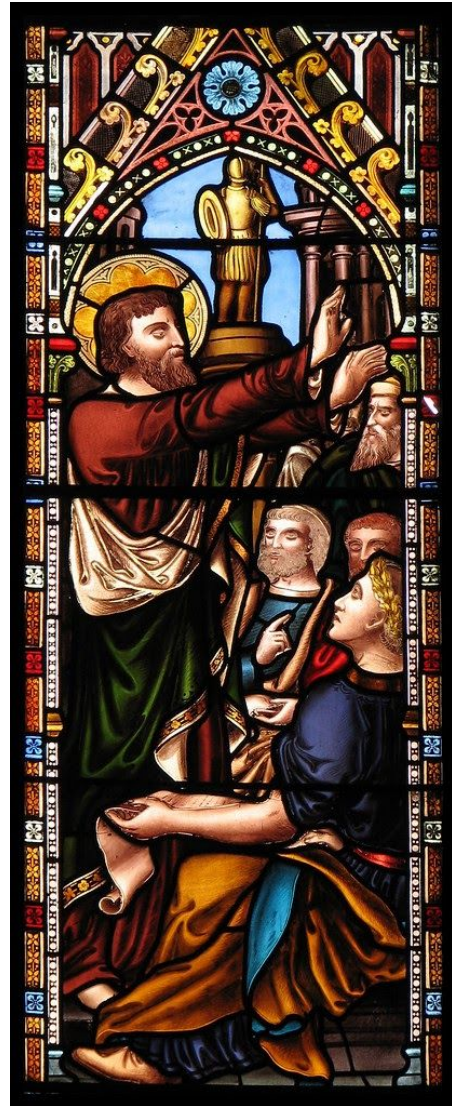
Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, ‘Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, “To an unknown god.” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For “In God we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said,

“For we too are his offspring.”

Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’

### Sermon

There’s a story about an old theologian, who watched a boy standing by the side of the sea. The boy had found a little hole in the beach and he carried a little bucket and he walked out to the water and he filled that bucket up. He carried it back to his little hole and he poured the water in.



And over and over again, he went back to that great sea to fill up his little bucket, and carry it over to the hole.

And finally, the theologian couldn't take it any longer, and shouted over to him, "What are you doing young man?!?"

And the boy replied, well, can't you tell, I'm going to move the sea into the hole that I have found.



And the wise theologian sneered, and said, "But, you'll never be able to move the fullness of that great ocean into your little hole, silly boy."

And the boy responded to say, "And you, great theologian, will never be able to fit the fullness of that great God you study into words created by human minds, will you?" And he disappeared from the beach to leave the theologian dumbfounded and speechless and in awe of the God that can't be understood or explained - the God we find everywhere we go, yet who remains a mystery to us.

I have had a lot of days where I feel like I'm carrying buckets full of sea-water lately and trying to fill up my little hole in the sand. I've been trying to understand God's role in this pandemic. I've been trying to explain what faithful living looks like in the weird new world we find ourselves in. And there are moments where it seems so odd and pointless to even try. It seems so impossible to explain or to understand. I almost want to give it all up.

But, I think the beauty of the statue to the unknown God is that God is greater than our understanding, so we don't have to understand. God is more powerful than the control we try to exert over our situations. God is freer than the liberty we yearn for. God lives out beyond our imaginations and our solutions.

So, we don't have to have it all figured out. We need only keep on searching for wisdom and groping for God's great love and



in that search God will provide us with all that we need. God will give us grace enough to get us through the day, to carry one more bucket of water, to speak one more word of compassion to a neighbor, to serve one more meal to our family, to lift up one more prayer that doesn't yet make any sense. And God will see this searching and groping for justice and truth, peace and wisdom, faith and hope. And God will see it as worthy worship and holy praise. As a fitting response to a God who is wild and free, uncontainable and unknowable. So let us keep on praying to this mysterious God. Let us keep on carrying the water and following the Christ until the day when he returns to reveal all.

Amen.

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