

Conversation And Proclamation

Promise: God's Word will accomplish that which it purposes

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Acts 17:16-31; Psalm 66:8-20; 1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

(Sixth Sunday of Easter, 5/14/23)

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. — v. 18

Lead In – In this Season of Easter we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ even as we contemplate the joyous implications Christ's rising from the dead has for our lives. Scripture describes Christ's Resurrection as "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." In other words, as Christ was raised from the tomb, baptized believers can look forward to sharing in a resurrection like His. This morning, in the First Reading we catch a glimpse of one of the important implications in our sharing in the Resurrected life of Christ. That life compels us to share the Gospel with others...

I. Paul's Spirit Was Provoked Within Him

- A. Seeing the world and ourselves in the truth of Word...
- B. Paul responded and not merely reacted...
- C. Engaging in substantial conversation and sharing...

II. Always Being Prepared to Make A Defense

- A. Careful Strategizing Versus Opportunistic...
- B. Apologetics, its meaning 'always being prepared'...
- C. Joyful, thankful hearts, during suffering...

III. The Apostle Paul's 'Mars Hill' Address

- A. Winsome lead in with attempts to connect...
- B. Pivoting sooner than later to repentance and forgiv...
- C. The basis for our present faith and future hope...

Parting Shot – In sharp contrast to the Apostle Peter's Pentecost Day sermon, we do not read of many Athenians that they were cut to the heart and that day 3,000 were baptized. Instead, the response at the Areopagus was threefold: some mocked; some deferred to a later date; and a few believed. Was the witness and proclamation a success? Ask Dionysius and Damaris. They were among the few that believed. "In season and out of season," Paul proclaimed Christ crucified and risen. And so should we. It is what believers are called and equipped to do.

1Co 15:20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.

Ro 6:5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

In the Truth of God's Word: 1) we are estranged from God; 2) we live in a fallen (broken) world in bondage to...; 3) we grope about searching in vain; 4) and we are perishing.

Ep 4:26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger.

Opportunistic: Peter and John on the way to pray in the Temple in Ac 3; the Macedonian Call in Ac 16; and escorted to the Areopagus...

Acts 17:16-31 ESV

Paul in Athens

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."

1Pe 3:15 in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

ἀπολογία (ap-ol-og-ee'-ah) – a speech in defense, a well-reasoned response, a thought-out response. In classical times this had nothing to do with the saying, "I am sorry."

Jn 16:33 In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

Js 1:2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds...

Mt 5:11 Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Lk 24:47 Repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations.

1Th4:14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again