

THE GOD TO KNOW
Acts 17.16-34

Today I want to talk about the God who is out of this world,
that loved the people of this world, and so came into the world
that we might have a real life and an eternal life.
That is the THE GOD TO KNOW.

To help say something about KNOWING THE GOD TO KNOW
I brought with me one of my favorite possessions, the remote.

I once and awhile drive my wife and kids crazy because I like to use the remote.
It is all about my needs being met-right?

Besides the remote is made to be used.
And you can skip commercials, except the ones you like,
and if you miss one, trust me, you'll get to see it again.

And another advantage is that you get to see more than one show at a time,
well at least parts of more than one show at a time.
I don't want to miss anything important,
especially if it is entertaining.

Actually, as I think about it,
changing from channel to channel might have just the opposite effect.

I might miss something important, something I need or want to know;
like who the main characters are, how the plot got to be the plot,
and how it all ends in the end.

You know in our faith life we often change channels as well.
It's so easy to do, to flip from god to god.

When we make our faith life all about us
we usually lose track of who is important,
what is important, and what we need to do that is important.

It is a self-serving, self indulgent, and self-righteous attitude
That Paul dealt with that in the first century.

Let's see how Paul, once Saul,
the Osama Bin Laden of his day
handled those with this self-serving attitude.

Pastor Eldon talked last week about the success Paul and Company had in Philippi.

In Acts 17 Paul goes the 100 miles from Philippi to Thessalonica
to tell them about the GOD THEY NEEDED TO KNOW.

As a result Paul collected a sizeable congregation, verse 4,
**“some of the Jews were persuaded...
 as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and prominent women.”**

He also collected a contingent of jealous Jews
 who hired some **“bad characters”** to do Paul and Silas in.

Paul and Silas laid low until night fall and then went down the road to Berea.

And again, in Berea Paul told people of the GOD THEY NEEDED TO KNOW
 and lives were changed, Acts 17.11b,
**“for they (the Bereans) received the message with great eagerness
 and examined the Scripture every day
 to see if what Paul said was true.”**

And again, the Jews put out a contract on Paul and Silas,
 Acts 17.13, **“...Paul was preaching the word at Berea,
 they went there too, agitating the crowds, and stirring them up.”**

So, the brothers got Paul out of town and escorted him to Athens, Acts 17.16b,
 and we hear, **“...he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.”**

Athens was a well known religious center.
 It is estimated that there were 25,000 public statues
 in the city and another 30,000 in the Parthenon.

Talk about being able to flip channel, I mean gods.
 It is said about Athens that it is easier to find “a god” than a man.

We might not want to be so hard on the Athenians.
 When we think about how easily we make health, wealth, or babies our gods.
 And don't we epitomize beauty, knowledge and intellect, talent and recreation in our culture?

The city of Athens was also a great cultural centerpiece of the entire Greek world.
 There was a 60,000 seat stadium, and a plethora of art galleries, music halls, museums, and sculptures.

It was the home of the great thinkers; Socrates, Plato, Epicurus, and Zeno
 and attracted intellectuals and philosophers from all over the world.

The Bible tells us that Paul was “distressed.”
 “Distressed” describes Paul's inner turmoil, his inner tension.
 It means to be provoked, sharpened, stimulated, appalled, or irritated.
 His heart ached for these people.

It's like when you see your kids doing something that you know they shouldn't do,
 and something you know, they know they shouldn't do, and the results are going to be bad.
 All you can do is shake your head as your heart hurts for them.

But as always, Paul takes advantage of a teachable moment.
 To satisfy their great spiritual hunger,
 He offers them the Bread of Heaven.
 HE tells them about Jesus, the GOD TO KNOW.

As usual he'll get some converts, some confused, and some critics.
 Verse 18 tells us about the critics,
**"A groups of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him.
 Some of them asked, 'What is this babbler trying to say?'"**

"Babbler" is kind of a fun word.
 It means "gutter snipe" which is a small, energetic little bird.

Charles Swindol says these philosophers saw Paul
 as a nervous little bird that picks up French fries in McDonald's parking lot.

Anyway it might be good to know
 something about the Stoics and the Epicureans.

You've heard the word stoic before.
 A stoic was one who fearlessly, passively accepted his fate.
 They tried to remain emotionally disengaged.

To them god was unknown and distant, out of this world.
 To them reason was of the highest good,
 actually to them reason is their god.

The Epicureans on the other hand
 sported an entirely different philosophy.

It might sound more familiar to us.
 Pleasure was their god.
 Life was all about fun and games.
 Eat, drink, and be merry was their mantra.
 There was nothing about respect or responsibility in their thinking.

All of these folks were infatuated with themselves and their keen intellects.
 They were also infatuated with anything new,
 the newest fads, the latest in toys, and the latest in thought.

I know something about that attitude.
 That was a prevalent attitude a good part of my life.

I loved to learn, just learning stuff, but sometimes learning can become a god in itself.
 I loved to be entertained, just entertained, but entertainment can just be a god in itself.
 In Groton in 1980 the Living GOD TO KNOW broke down, broken through, and broke in
 to my life through a personal crisis.

My heart changed, my attitude and actions changed, my beliefs and my behavior changed.

God wasn't just something for me to think about or talk about anymore.
God was someone for me to thank and to trust.

Paul had said some things to these Athenians they hadn't heard before,
ome pretty interesting things,
so, they invited him to be the guest speaker at the Areopagus,
the sacred center of intellectual, academic, and theological debate.

It's not a bad thing to think about or talk about philosophy or theology
but they really weren't interested in knowing the truth,
knowing what they should know or what they should do.
This just wanted to play this theological tennis.
They really only wanted to be entertained.

Another teachable moment-Paul take this opportunity to tell them
that their unknown GOD IS THE GOD THEY REALLY SHOULD KNOW.

He starts his sermon by acknowledging that they are religious,
so religious in fact they even have an altar for an unknown god.

And their unknown god is the GOD TO KNOW,
and that this God that is unknown wants to be known.

Hear this, Verses 27 and following,

**"God did this so men would seek him and perhaps
reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each of us.
For in him we live and move and have our being...We are his offspring."**

Paul isn't talking about religion, rules, or ritual, he is talking about relationship.
The unknown God is alive, he's not made out of medal or stone,
or made by man's design, he is the God to know.

In verse 30b, he adds, **"...commands all people everywhere to repent
to turn around, to turn back to the real God."**

And that there will be one (Jesus) coming to judge with justice.
Proof of that is he has been raised from the dead.

Here some of the crowd became unglued,
Others stuck and wanted to know more about the GOD TO KNOW.
When you think about it Jesus made several claims to be God,
**"I am the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd,
the Door, the Resurrection and the Life, the True Vine,**

And Jesus told his friends on the night he was betrayed, at their Passover Meal,
which is in part a model for our communion which in a few minutes we will take part in,

**“I am the way, the truth, and the life...
If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well.
From now on, you do know him, and have seen him.”**

The unknown god is still the God to know
and has gone to great lengths to let you know that.

He is the God that is out of this world but has sent his son into the world
To die for our sin and be raised from the dead.

Interestingly enough, there are still times
that we can find him out of this world, like on July 20th, 1969.

It was a great day for our nation.
It was the first time a man walked on the moon,
and also the first time that communion was received on the moon.

Astronaut Buzz Aldrin, of Apollo 11, told of his experience,
“I opened the packages containing the bread and wine.
I poured the wine into a chalice the church had given me.
Since the moon’s gravity is 1/6 of the earth’s,
The wine slowly and gracefully curled up the side of the cup.

Then I read the scripture,
**‘I am the vine, you are the branches.
Whoever abides in me will bring forth much fruit...
apart from me you can do nothing.’**

I gave thanks and it was interesting for me to think;
that on the Sea of Tranquility on the moon,
the first liquid poured on the moon,
and the very first food eaten on the moon were communion elements,
AND some of the very first words spoken on the moon
were the words of Jesus Christ who made the earth and moon.”

Isn’t that great.
It’s interesting to know too that Paul and the early Christians
were not the only ones to experience persecution.

NASA asked Aldrin not to publically read the words of Jesus
because NASA was in the middle of a legal battle with atheist Madelyn Murry OHare.
The Apollo 8 crew had read some of Genesis when orbiting the moon.

I know most of you have heard of this out of this world God
that has come into our world.

He is the God to know and wants you to know him.
The question to you is do you want to know him?

