

THE CHURCH BEYOND

FROM THE EMPTY GRAVE TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH



SERMON NOTES: THE CHURCH BEYOND 3: BEYOND THE EARLY CHURCH (10/4/16)

SCRIPTURE

Acts 17:16-34

KEY POINTS

- + Up until now, the church has continued to go out and spread the gospel message. In chapter 17, Paul (converted from persecutor of Christians to leader of the church) lists Athens: the birthplace of the Western mind
- + Paul encountered the Epicureans (believe life now is all there is; eat, drink & be merry...) and Stoics (believe god exists in everything; self-development is the main goal) whose beliefs are summarised in finding the answers within yourself.
- + This is the philosophy we're pushed to today: find your own answers, don't tie yourself down with commitments, don't trust institutions, don't accept limits in finding yourself.
- + Like the Epicureans and Stoics, we seek God, but we're looking for the answers in ourselves.
- + The Church is an invitation to not be afraid of the future, to invest, to commit; and to reject the idol of perpetual seeking.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- + Read Acts 17:16-34 as a *Lectio Divina* meditation. Before beginning, encourage listeners to find themselves 'in' the story: as a philosopher at the areopagus, as Paul explaining the answer to their search, as one of the few who become believers. After reading the passage 3 times break into pairs to share reflections.
- + Verses 26-28 hint at God's orchestration of life, that 'men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him.' Do you see this playing out in the lives of those around you? What about in your own life?

- + **What stuck out to you from the teaching?** Did God remind you of something, or reveal something new? Did the Spirit minister to you?
- + **Were any questions raised for you?** Did you get stuck on any scriptures or points? Anything you need clarity on?
- + **Where do we see Jesus Christ in this teaching?** Jesus is at the centre of everything in the Scriptures. It follows that he is at the centre of everything we understand about church, faith and the Kingdom. What in the teaching has helped you see more of Jesus and the cross, or moved you to love him more?
- + **How can you personally apply this teaching?** Identify and commit to something you sense the Spirit is leading you to do in obedient response. Make it actionable and personal. What is in place to help you stay accountable to this?
- + **What/with whom can you share from here?** Who in your life needs to know the truth you've discovered? How can you share it with them?