

The Church Unleashed

“Going to Mars”

Acts 17:16-24

OPEN WITH PRAYER

GETTING STARTED: What are some of your favorite songs or movies? Are there particular scenes in the movies or themes in the songs that you love?

LEARNING & APPLYING GOD’S WORD

Read Acts 17:16-24 together

1. The first section depicts a center of ideas and culture in Athens, the Areopagus (which can also be translated “Mars Hill”). How does Acts 17:16-34 describe this environment? What is a similar place, a similar center or ideas in culture, in Chico or whatever city you live in?
2. In the polytheistic world of ancient Athens, there apparently was a concern that not every god had been given due honor, and so there was an altar to an “unknown god” (verse 23). Essentially, this is superstition, a fear that God, or the gods, are not happy with us. Is our time also a time of superstition? Why or Why not?
3. Paul cites two poets, Epimenides and Aratus, in the third section (verses 24-28) as a way of saying that the Gospel of Jesus *fulfills* the longings of the ancient Greek culture and its poets. Who might Paul quote today in our country or even more particularly in Chico as a pointer to our hopes and concerns? Would it be music, film, tv shows, or something else?
4. Paul’s sermon goes on in verses 29-31 to declare that the one true God wants us to “turn around” (or “repent,” verse 30) and come to know him. What does that look like? How do people usually respond to this call to turn around? Where does our culture—and where do we in the Christian community—need to turn back to God?

5. There are three responses to Paul's message that the Gospel fulfills the cries of the ancient Greek culture (verses 32-34): they are "sneering," interest, and following Christ. What's your experience with people you know who hear the message of faith for the first time? Have you shared your faith with people in your work or your neighborhood? What does the message of Christ trigger in people's hearts? In your experience, does it fit this threefold pattern (rejection, interest, and acceptance), or are there more possibilities?

LIVING OUT "REAL LIFE"

1. Where are there places that you find yourself right now that offer a place for you to share the Gospel? What prevents you from sharing your faith? Are there one or two people that you sense God is calling you to share the fulfillment that Jesus brings?
2. Part of the "Church Unleashed" series is that we are "outwardly focused." What can our church community do to put itself at the center of culture, on our "Mars Hill"? What can you do to help our church bring the message of Christ to the community around us?

SHARING AND PRAYER (Prayer Requests)

Take some time to share prayer requests, where you need to find God's grace and peace. Be sure to give thanks for each other and pray for one another's needs. When we pray together, we find the power of God.