

WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of Saint David

May 25, 2014

The Ancient City of Athens



WHEN IN ATHENS...

Gathering: *Lord God of heaven and earth, Creator of our world, and everything in it, yet as close to us as our own breath - holy is Your name.*

In You we live and move and have our being; we are Your own children, the work of Your hands. *We pray that Your Holy Spirit would move among us as we worship, opening our eyes to Your presence, opening our ears to Your Word. Receive the worship of our hearts and minds and bodies; may it be a pleasing offering to You. We pray in the name of Your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, in whose death and resurrection we find life. Amen.*

A PRAYER EXERCISE

Let us breathe in strength. *(pause for breath...)*

And, let us exhale our exhaustion. *(pause to exhale...)*

Let us breathe in freedom. *(pause for breath...)*

And, let us exhale all that holds us back. *(pause to exhale...)*

Let us breathe in a new sense of direction. *(pause for breath...)*

And, let us exhale the paths we no longer want to use. *(pause to exhale...)* Let us breathe in hope. *(pause for breath...)*

And, let us exhale self-doubt. *(pause to exhale...)*

Let us breathe in unconditional love. *(pause for breath...)*

And, let us exhale distrust and hate. *(pause to exhale...)*

Holy Spirit, let us feel the mighty rush of your presence in this place. Blow away our fears and worries, and help us to breathe in your gifts of new life. Amen. *(Columbia*

Presbyterian Church)

Hymn: Jesus we are gathered

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A thought to guide us: *"The gospel sounds different everywhere it is told. That's because the gospel does not exist in some unadulterated form in isolation from human language, culture, or presuppositions. It's always enfleshed in some way - linguistically, culturally, personally."*

Scripture: 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 him we live and move and have

our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we too are his offspring.'...

Commentary: *Paul is in Athens, the center of Greek culture and thought, and he's addressing a very different crowd than he usually does. He's in the Areopagus, not the synagogue, and these folks don't know – or care – about the history of the patriarchs and God's faithfulness to the Hebrew people. He has to meet people "where they are." Luke portrays Paul as relentlessly pursuing debate, "every day with those who happened to be there." The philosophers invited him to come and talk with them about this "new teaching" – after all, the text says, lots of people in Athens loved to spend their time "in nothing but telling or hearing something new." Paul accepts their invitation and delivers a speech that begins by getting on their good side, complimenting them on their religious piety but offering them an answer to what appears to be an unknown – "the unknown god" that nevertheless inspires altars – the unknown that might stand for the unanswered questions, the inexpressible longing for the transcendent, the spiritual hunger that every human being experiences. Paul helps these spiritually hungry folks out by naming the focus of that hunger and longing, the answer to their questions... The speech was not a huge success, but the verses after the text ends indicate that at least one distinguished member of the community and an unknown woman were converted.*

Meditation: *What if we took Paul's advice to look for the God who is not far away, but actually close by? What if our inward looking led us to see the places in our souls where God has already been at work, stirring in us the desire for meaning? What if our outward searching led us to see the places where God has already been at work in the world? What if our searching could lead us to recognize meaning, happiness, peace, belonging, and all those other things we need, that aren't that far away at all?*

A moment with Mwawi

Hymn: Open our eyes, Lord, we want to see Jesus **445**

Invitation:

It is in Jesus that we live and move and have our being. It is in Jesus we find the way, the truth and the life. It is in Jesus that we become the church – a community created and founded on Jesus Christ who meets us as we sit at table together. At this table we come together as the guests of Jesus.

Hymn: We come as guests invited **524**

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

The Lord is here. God's spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give thanks and praise. (Continue in thanksgiving)

O God, giver of all that is good,

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. May we know you in the teaching, praying, breaking of bread and especially in the communion we share with one another. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other.

Hymn: An upper room (vs.1-2) **224**

Communion

Prayer after Communion *Thanks be to you, O God, for your presence and your purpose, for your loving kindness and your steadfast Spirit. May the blessings of this table strengthen our faith, increase our generosity and unify our hearts, for we pray in the name of Jesus, the Risen One. Amen.*

Hymn: Send me Lord **777**

Go now into the world. Search for the God who is not far from each one of us. Offer to all who ask an account of the hope that is in you. Keep your conscience clear as you live the commandments in love. And may God greet your prayers with constant love; may Christ Jesus give you life through his own life; and may the Spirit of truth abide with you and within you, always.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, in the name of Christ. Amen.