

Worshipping an Unknown God 6 Easter A

The Athenians were a very religious group of people. They had an approach to God we would say today, "Covers all the bases." The apostle Paul assessed their religiosity by observing the symbols of worship they had collected around town. Just in case a god had been overlooked they had an altar erected to the "Unknown god." Why go on record for having offended a deity?

The Athenians were the upper class of ancient Greek society. A powerful city-state, Athens was the centre for the arts, learning and philosophy. It was the home of Plato's Academy and Aristotle's [Lyceum](#). Athens was also the birthplace of Socrates, Pericles, Sophocles, and its many other prominent philosophers, writers and politicians of the ancient world. It is widely referred to as the cradle of Western civilization and the birthplace of democracy. It is the modern capitol of Greece. In short, Athens was a place that did not have a lot of needs. And when Christian missionaries aimed their sites at Athens they had their work cut out for them.

Paul addressed the council of Areopagus, not by berating the Athenian quest for knowledge and truth but by building on it. The very fact that these Athenians are intellectually and spiritually searching for God, Paul insists is itself proof of the divine spark placed inside each human soul. Our common ancestry also, Paul points out, pulls us on this spiritual quest. After all, one of their own poets wrote, "For we too are his offspring."

"In him we live and move and have our being," suggests an intentional journey of faith that Paul uses to counter the arguments of the Greek philosophers. The idea that there was a God who did not dwell in temples made by humans, a Being that did not need us and One who in spite of our death could raise us in the resurrection was laughable. Many scoffed at St. Paul for trying to change their way of thinking. Others caught the vision of a God who sought to transform their lives that they would know Him through His Son Jesus Christ.

Paul did for the Athenians what the vestry and I hope to do in the rest of our time of worship. Paul sought to renew their minds by taking what they already knew of God in their hearts and teaching them the next step. What is the next step in your faith journey? What is called Formation, to be formed in the faith, is to understand your journey in faith and be able to tell us about your needs in walking with

God. Tell us your story: about your dependence on God, what you are doing to take responsibility for your relationship and what the church can do to help in your journey.

During the rest of our sermon time until the Prayers of the People we ask you to silently fill out your response to these three statements. Pencils are provided. Ushers will come to the inside aisle to pick up papers and pencils. Thank you for sharing your heart. Amen.