**“Something New?”**

Acts 17:16-31

1 Peter 3:13-22

John 14:15-21

Easter 6

“Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new. But Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said, ‘The times of ignorance God overlooked, but **now** He commands all people everywhere to repent, because **He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a Man Whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead**.’”

And Christ **is risen!** He is **risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

I always contend that if the Apostle Paul **walked around today**, maybe strolling through the Galleria Mall in Cool Springs, seeing the normal crowds on the strip of honky-tonks along Broadway, Nissan Stadium on a Sunday afternoon during a Titans home game, or (for that matter) in front of TVs many weekends during football season for the college or pro games, **he would react exactly the same way that he did in Athens strolling around its marketplaces and gathering spot that they called the Areopagus**.

See, there’s nothing **different**-**at-all** between the societies of 1st Century Greece and 21st Century America. Both **entertained** and **conducted business** and, really, **religiously** **worshiped what- and who-all they worshiped** … and did all of **that systematically**. Both **religiously** **craved** and **sought after things**, did things habitually by **desire** so literally **consume consistently and with regularity** whatever strikes the **fancy**, sometimes from a sense of **duty**, yet that duty was shaped in us (like them) by **influences** and **decisions**, even **whims** that are, then, **let** to **become religious habit**.

And Athenians (like Americans) do most of that as **groups** and **in mass**, but **individuals-acting**-**individually** are just as **religiously inclined**. Imagine being born and growing up alone on a deserted island (the only one there). It’s a **sure thing** that you’d religiously repeat a **tree-touch**, for instance, if on the way down to fish for your dinner (and having had great success after not so much before) you’d (that time) touched a certain tree on the way to getting there. Until something other (and compelling) changes that stance, you’d be a **religious** **Tree-Toucher on the way to go fishing from then on**. The **tree**, then, becomes the object of your worship, so, religiously, you pay homage where you think it’s appropriate … and, thus, your **religious system** gets systematically developed and instilled … becomes habit (Good or bad, appropriate / orthodox or not).

God created all people “that they should **seek Him, in the hope that they might feel their way toward Him and find Him**”. Paul spoke up about a **natural religious desire within creatures**, yet he wanted to reveal **true knowledge** to Athenians, what we ought to recognize in **our own societies’ most-often mis-directed baseness** (“spiritual but **not religious**” being **not** an **honest** option). **Clarity**, then, about the object of orthodox (or correct) worship needs to be **discussed here**; and Paul to **learned people then** said that such a **discussion** is necessary to note how “out there” “wrong ideas **are** among people so that **what’s true and accurate might get recognized (or made manifest and known)**”.

**Text**

So the challenge is **here**: Paul said to **learned people** that “the **times of ignorance God overlooked before Christ, but NOW SINCE He commands all people everywhere to repent of wrongness**”. In other words, “**all people everywhere**” were and are to **become appropriate / orthodox (correctly worshiping) learned people**, since “**idols**” (and they are are anything besides God to whom we could be guilty of giving homage and religious worship to) and that will be judged us if not repenting of it where it happens. It’s so important that the Apostles’ Creed was the **baptismal formula of content into which people were baptized** **… a particular orthodox (true) faith in content**, and Paul practically recites the First Article of it to the Athenians. “I believe in God, the Father Almighty”, he tells them, “Maker of heaven and earth”. And of what that means he expounds almost like this:

“I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals, and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him.

“This is most certainly **true**” (not opinion or a new and novel thought to add to lots of others of equal value, but the “**TRUE**” faith in content … the one all will be **judged by with no excuse … on how we paid our appropriate religious homage to IT** **… to God**.

And that’s not “**something** **new**”. Modern thought has most of society thinking that “**novelty**” or, as it’s sometimes called: “**relevancy to this particular time**” as if our-times-are-new-to-this-earth. But “new” has been **faddish** mostly (over history) and **heretical** everywhere new is systematically applied (putting “**new**” **words** to so-called correct **Good Words**, or “**new**” **twists** to drown-out facts: called “irrelevant” and boring (“new” rather than “true” being the goal). And Athenians were **no different-in-that than we are**. Paul **said** that “**all** the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would **spend their time in** **nothing except** telling or hearing **something new**”.

But, this time, that something **new to them (unclarified and unarticulated)** was the **WITNESS** Paul gave of God the Almighty Who’d created all things, and His Son “Who He appointed” to deliver the Gospel of salvation through His own sacrificial bloodshed, “**assured life from death** **for all believing** by raising Him from the dead”. And He and that Gospel was, really, **not new**: Him **Fatherly** since Adam and Eve, **saving** through the baptism of water (as we hear in 1st Peter) delivering Noah’s family that way, having **invited all that way** who’d watched the building of the ark but chose against it.

**Application**

And this not “new” but **true and accurate** **WITNESS,** **WE (WHO KNOW IT)** must “**MAKE A SURE DEFENSE OF**”. We’re to know and **SAY** that **God is God** and that “**Christ the Lord, His Son, is Holy**”). And the world **will be** “**JUDGED in this righteousness**” on a “fixed day” … “**ignorance**” will be no longer “overlooked by God”.

And we have “**Help**” in that **WITNESS**. Jesus tells us in John 14 that this “Help” “**dwells with us** and” (since the out-pouring at Pentecost) “will be, also, **in us**” **as we receive Him**. And that is, of course, the 3rd Person of the Godhead (the Spirit), but **not just Him**. This text shows and promises **all three persons of the Godhead** indwelling as “Help”. Jesus said: “Because I live, you also will live, and **you will see Me even as the world cannot**. And I am **in My Father**, and **you in Me**, and **I in you**”, so we have the promise of **Him and the Father, with the Spirit,** **dwelling within** His repentant and orthodox (correctly-worshiping) offspring. …..

While way too many **still** **worship the** **unknown**, Paul proclaimed **correct / orthodox worship**; and **we can speak of it also. We can proclaim God as God**. **We MUST speak not of something** “**NEW**” but “**TRUE**” and, maybe, just not **clarified** among some. **We can** **BE HELP**, fearing no one but God in that **clarification task**. Peter asks this: “who **is there** to **harm you** if you are **zealous for what is Good?**” And Christ **is risen!** He is **risen, indeed!** Alleluia! May we be **faithful** and **diligent** in **our proclamation**. In +Jesus’ name. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, **keep** your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.