

Heavenly Father, move us to engage the world around us with the truths not only of Your existence but most importantly of Your eternal love for the entire human race, so that many of our neighbors might seek You through repentance and come to the true knowledge that You have saved them through the work of Your crucified and risen Son in their behalf. Amen.

So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god. 'What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward Him and find Him. Yet He is actually 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 are indeed His offspring.' Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

In Christ Jesus, who, coming from the bosom of the Father, has made our Creator's graciousness known to us, dear fellow redeemed:

The objects of the Athenians' worship were well known by them, since they were all created through their own imaginations and by their revered artisans. These gods had no need to reveal themselves, because again their existence came from the imaginations of their creators and chronicled in their oral traditions and recorded in their literature. But they lacked confidence that they got it right, so fearful of this possibility that they might be ignoring a god, they erected an altar to what they called the "*Unknown God*."

The Apostle Paul holding his own before their celebrated philosophers, took this opportunity to speak with boldness and clarity, teaching them **The Maker and Giver of All Things Good Makes Himself Known**. Then he proceeded to declare Him to them.

I

You see, a real God makes Himself known. It is utterly ridiculous to imagine that a real God would be dependent on those who worship Him to come up with the truths of who He is, what He does, how He relates to His beloved creatures. God's revelation of

Himself is how you and I know the One true God. God has revealed Himself to us through His Word, not through our imaginations.

Now we do gather here regularly to worship the One true God, but we know He is not found only here. As Paul pointed out: “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man.” God is omnipresent, present everywhere, filling all things. But He has prescribed how we are to worship Him. First we are to let the Word of the Gospel of our salvation in Christ, to dwell in us richly through hearing that Word and receiving it in the Sacraments. These activities are to be watched over by an office He established namely the office of the public ministry and this work is primarily to happen where Christians gather together for the purpose of receiving from God.

Paul describes what goes on in this worship when he says: God is not “served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.” Christians gather together for divine services. This is not their service rendered to God with their hands and voices. Rather primarily they receive from His gracious hands and His life-giving voice.

This process is contrary to our natural way of thinking as sinners. We imagine our service rendered to God counts toward our relationship with Him. No, He is God from eternity and existed before the human race came into existence. He is in need of nothing from us, angels or any other creature. When God created us, it was His love that moved Him to give us life and breath and everything.

However, we arrogantly imagine we can give something to God. The One true God is always the Giver. You and I are the recipients. Trusting with thanksgiving that He truly gives you all good things is the highest form of worship of the One true God.

So while the Athenians thought they were finding this unknown God, they approached Him in the absolutely wrong way. God needed to reveal Himself to them and needed to serve them with all His gifts, especially the gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation.

II

We live in a culture that promotes a lie based on man’s imagination, i.e., evolution. But everyone, even those who promote evolution, know that there is a Creator God. It is part of the natural knowledge of man. Paul pointed this out to the Romans when he wrote: “what can be known about God is plain to [the Gentiles], because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have

been made.” But the appeal of the theory of evolution for those who do not know the true God is that if they can eliminate Him at the beginning of all things, they conclude they will not have to deal with Him at the end of all things.

Now do not misunderstand, what God has revealed to us about Creation is not divorced from what He revealed to us about Salvation. God’s creating activity and His saving activity are intimately and lovingly connected, connected for us in His Son, the Word made flesh.

You may have been tempted by the world’s wisdom concerning its theory of evolution, thinking that God is really holding out from you in His Word how all things really came into being. It is tempting to think this way because through accommodations you can get along with the world and avoid being objects of their scorn and mockery. But giving up what God has made known about His creative activity leads to giving up what God has done to save you.

The One true God is not an impersonal God of chance, standing by and watching things develop out of His control. But He is the personal God of purposeful design conceived from eternity. He desired you to be here. He desired you to be with Him for all eternity. He wants all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of truth. So He sent His Son to be our Substitute before His divine bar of justice. Jesus, God’s holy Son, completely procured for us forgiveness of all our sin by His holy sacrifice upon the cross and crediting to us His holy life of righteousness.

The Maker and Giver of all things good makes Himself known. He inspired writers for over a millennium to give us the truths that set sinners free now and forever. The same attribute of being gracious was already present when all things were created; our Creator God is also our Savior God.

After our text Paul went on to point out this: God now “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.” Just as knowing there is a Creator God, all men, even unbelievers know that they are answerable to this same God for their sin. So when Paul speaks to them about a judgment to come, he speaks of this Man who is appointed to make such a judgment actually rising from the dead. This was novel to their ears, that a Man would defeat the dreaded consequence of sin by rising from the dead. Some mocked Paul, but others were intrigued and wanted to hear more and even others came to faith by these very

words declared to them making the formerly "*Unknown God*" known as a gracious God in Christ Jesus who gives us all that we need.

The woman in our Gospel lesson for today approached Jesus as her Lord God whom she came to know as her loving gracious Lord despite what she saw and heard and was not disappointed. You, my fellow redeemed, know Him as the everlasting generous God who gave your body life and also gave you new life as a redeemed child of God through His Son. Never stop seeking Him where He has promised to be found. Satan loves to convince us we cannot know the true God. God has not withheld anything we need to know for our salvation. Worship Him as your one and only true God who has made it clear that He has given you all good things and for Jesus' sake will continue to do so forever. You are His redeemed child with all sins forgiven and dressed in His robe of everlasting righteousness. Amen.