



Sermon  
Rev. Dr. Lang Yang

## “The Unknown God”

Sixth Sunday of Easter  
Our Savior Lutheran Church  
5-21-17

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

**Acts 17:22-23** *Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.*” ‘This is the word of the Lord.’ (Cross Reference – Tes Dejum 17:15, 19, 30, 34; 25:19, Yaxayas 45:4, Yauhas 4:22, 2 Thexalaunikes 2:4)

Illustration Monster

“Show protection from ancestor like inside of their palm”



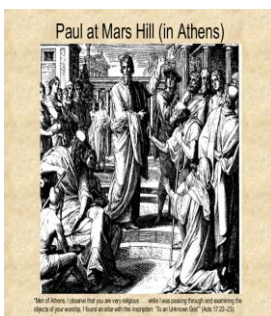
In 1977, when I was in Thailand at the age of 9, I woke up in the middle of night with a terrible dream that a monster with a sharp teeth was chasing after me. I ran and ran but the monster was getting closer and closer. When the monster reach and grab my arm, I scream, “Help!” My mother came to me and said, “It is alright, you are protect by our ancestor. Our ancestor will come and protect us. They will put us into the palm of their hand and protect us and no one will be able to harm us.” Years had pass, as I look back, because of my mother believe in animism, “*the way of the spirit,*” she didn’t know who the true God was. How

could a dead ancestor protect me? What power do they have? I don’t mean to be in a disrespectful to the ancestor in any way, but they are not God, and what power do they have? In the animism belief, if your mind say it will be done, then your mind is at ease and just let it be. Because it is better not to know the unknown then to know.

I. In our lesson from the book of Acts, the Apostle Paul was in Athens, Greece. (Show Athens Greece)



Athens was the capital of Greek philosophy. It was a city of intellectuals. It was also a city of idols. 1000’s of statues and altars lined the street and filled the buildings. One scholar had written that the city had 10,000’s people but the idols numbered 30,000. Paul spoke boldly about Christ. His preaching caught the attention of some of the city’s intellectuals – a group of men called the Areopagus. They wanted to hear more about this Jesus. (Show Acts 17:22-23)



So, the Apostle gets right to the point. He said, “*Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.*” (Acts 17:22-23) The people of Athens were indeed very religious. They carefully paid homage to all their deities. They were so afraid of offending the gods in fact that they even put up an altar to an “unknown god” just in case they missed one. They didn’t want a god to feel insulted by being over looked. So they put up an altar just to make sure they had all the bases covered.

In their time, the Athenians were spiritually ignorant. The gods they worshipped were nothing but the forces of nature. They worship: (Show Greek god)

Zeus, god of sky;

Poseidon, god of the sea;

Demeter, god of vegetation.

Greek God's



They had no ideas what god they really worship. They were just guessing. And yet they were very religious – but what religion was it? They worship their gods faithfully – but they had no idea who the true god was.

II. Among people are very religious people. 95% believe in their ancestor for their time of bad or good. When the good time arrived, they give praise and remember to give thanks to their ancestor. But when the hard time arrive, they blame, curse and beg their ancestor to stop hurting them.

(Show chicken, pig, and cow sacrifice)



To meet their ancestor needs, they sacrifice animals “chicken, pig or cow” to them by asking them not to curse them but to bring much happiness instead of sadness. Promise were made and if the individual

doesn't pay those promise by making more animal sacrifice then his family is heading toward destruction. So a person constantly live in fear and don't know who's to turn to for comfort. (Show in the United States)

**In the United States**  
95% of our nations believe in God  
60% pray daily  
Only about 30% of Christians go to church  
Our nations may be very religious – but what do we believe? We talk a lot about God – but do we really know God?

In the United States, people are very religious people. 95% of our nations believe in God. 60% pray daily. But what God do we believe in? What God are we praying to, and what are we asking him to do? Those statistics raise even more question when only about 30% of Christians go to church. Our nations may be very religious – but what do we believe? We talk a lot about God – but do we really know God?

In many ways God is unknown to us – we don't read the Bible. It set on bookshelf and we let it collected dust. Our lives bear the outward signs of religion, but on the inside, we don't really know God. People then began to wonder off to believing different gods. (Show altar, statue and Hinduism god)



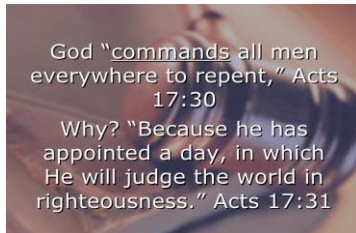
Thai and the Southeast Asian people believe in Buddhism. Shrines, statue, and altar were build so they could worship. In India, altar, shrine and were dedicated to spirits or gods of each bridge and each village. No one knows how many gods there are in Hinduism—hundreds of millions, I suppose, because anyone who wants his own god can have one. It's the same in India today as in Athens 2000 years ago. When you don't know the true God, you always turn to idols. And not just one, but to many idols, because one is never enough.

(Show Acts 17:24)



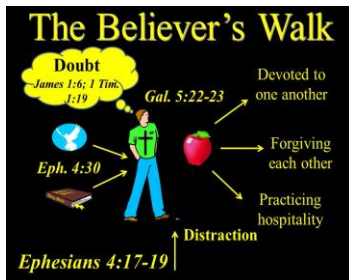
How do we know God? As St. Paul said, *“Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.”* First, Paul says God is the creator: Vs. 24 *“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.”* Paul made God known to them as one, all powerful, personal being, not an image made of wood or stone. The true God is the creator – something that we human fail to fully understand.

### III. More importantly, God reveals himself as the Savior and redeemer. (Show Acts 17:31)



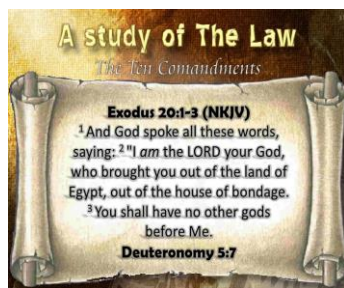
Vs. 27 and 31 Paul said, *“God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, through he is not far from each one of us... For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”* Knowing that God is our creator is important. Knowing that he save us thru the life, death, and resurrection of Christ is most important of all. God is the God of justice, who must condemn sin.

But he has chosen to condemn and punish sin in the person of his Son Jesus. Thru his crucifixion we are made members of his family, his sons, and daughters by faith. (Show the believer’s walk)



Thru his resurrection we are given life – the forgiven life, the blessed life, eternal life by his grace and love. That’s what Paul wanted the people of Athens to know. That is what we need to know, so we do not worship an unknown God. Men can't reason your way to God because human reason has been darkened by our sinful nature. This is what St. Paul mean when he wrote to the Ephesians 4:17-19 *“So, I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentile do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God*

*because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.”* We can still think but we can't think God’s thoughts unless the Holy Spirits illuminates our minds so that we can see God’s truth. The way to heaven must be revealed from above. (Show Exodus 20:3)



Spirit. God command us in our first commandment said, *“You shall have no others god.”* (Exodus 20:3) (Show 1 Corinthians 8:6)



*“Yet for us there is but one God, and the father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.”* (1 Corinthians 8:6) God came and lived with us and revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ. He shows us the wonder of his creation all around us. He speaks to us thru His word and tell us his love that we may come to know him. May his true identity not escape us and truly know him. Amen. Now may the peace of god which passes all understanding keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Amen.