

Theme for Sunday, May 29, 2011

The Sixth Sunday of Easter

“Holy Discontent”

Acts 17: 16 – 31

Being connected to our Lord in faith moves us to begin to adopt His attitudes as our own. With the Spirit’s presence, we are led to love what our holy Lord does, as well as to have discontent with those things He finds offensive.

This morning we will discover how God used St. Paul’s “holy discontent” towards the numerous worthless idols in Athens to seize an opportunity to witness to the one true God. In the process, he led many of the educated, unbelieving Athenians to the only true God and His answer in Jesus. May we be empowered to have a “holy discontent” as well, prompting us to be our Lord’s humble workers and allowing us the privilege of helping to transform what still needs to be fixed according to His divine plan.



Connecting Points: Our Vision in Action

Paul was able to tell people about God because he knew Him well. Identify one way you could, with the Spirit’s help, get to know God better and put it into action this week.

The philosophers who heard the Gospel from Paul had built an altar “to the unknown god”. What are some of the “unknown gods” people are attracted to today? How might you share the true God with them?

Connecting People to Christ Now and Forever

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Introit

- L: Oh sing to the LORD a new song;
C: **Sing to the LORD, all the earth!**
L: Sing to the LORD, bless His name;
C: **Tell of His salvation from day to day.**
L: Declare His glory among the nations,
C: **His marvelous works among all the peoples!**
L: For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
C: **He is to be feared above all gods.**
L: For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols,
C: **But the LORD made the heavens.**
L: Splendor and majesty are before Him;
C: **Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.**
L: Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
C: **Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!**
L: Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;
C: **Bring an offering, and come into His courts!**
L: Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness;
C: **Tremble before Him, all the earth!**

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The First Lesson

Acts 17: 16 – 31

(St. Paul boldly challenged the intelligentsia of Athens to recognize that their self-created gods had no power. St. Paul redirects the unbelieving Athenians to a sovereign God who was their Creator and Sustainer, challenging them to repentance and faith in God's resurrected Son, Jesus.)

¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babbler wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities" – because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." ²¹Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

²²So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³For 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. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶And 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, ²⁷that 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, ²⁸for " '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.' ²⁹Being 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. ³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because 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."

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The Epistle Lesson

1 Peter 3: 13 – 22

(Peter challenges those who persevere in the faith to be zealous, but gentle in their approach to others when explaining the object and source of their faith. Christ's own example of suffering and his powerful rescue by the waters of Baptism are sources of strength for those of us still fighting the good fight of faith.)

¹³Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

¹⁸For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²²who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

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The Gospel Lesson

John 14: 15 – 21

(Jesus reassures His disciples that they will not be abandoned but will be comforted by the gift of the Spirit of truth and that they will be connected, always, to Him and His Father by faith.)

(Jesus said,) ¹⁵“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, ¹⁷even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

¹⁸“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

²⁰In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

²¹Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”