

**Theme: "In God We Live"**

Text: Acts 17: 10 – 31

Season: 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Date: September 11, 2016

Place: Shepherd of the Rockies LCMS, Bailey, Co

Grace and peace to you as you live in God's love, from God, our Father, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we continue in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Acts of the Apostles with the Apostle Paul, Silas and Timothy on their 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey through Macedonia and into Greece. Last week Paul and Silas were beaten and jailed unjustly in Philippi, but now they have traveling to Thessalonica and then to Berea establishing congregations of believers in Jesus Christ. We are told, ***"the Bereans received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so."*** (Acts 17:11)

Today if you are called a Berean, it's a complement because people see that you don't just take the word of someone for a fact but you search God's Word to see if what you are told is truly what God's Word says. Oh, what a joy it would be to have a whole congregation full of Bereans who not only listened to what a pastor or anyone else said about God, but checked it out by reading and studying God's Word to make sure that they were receiving all of God's truth in their life.

Now despite the successes that the Apostle Paul, Silas and Timothy were having in Philippi, Thessalonica and Berea by bringing more people to faith in Jesus Christ, there were still those, lead by the devil, out to stop the Apostle Paul from sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world. In each city as the crowds were stirred up to get the Apostle Paul, the believers sent Paul on to another city. So it was in Berea as the crowds were stirred up that the Apostle Paul was sent on to Athens, while leaving Silas and Timothy in Berea to help the congregation to get established.

Athens, the city of the Greek Philosophers, here the Apostle Paul once again goes to the Jews first, but while staying there waiting for the return of Silas and Timothy from Berea, he is asked to talk to a group of philosophers at the Areopagus, about this religion he is preaching that deals with this man called Jesus Christ. We are told, ***"So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. [23] 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."*** (Acts 17:22 – 23)

What does the world that we live in worship? Well the recent censuses have told us that less than half of the Americans in the United States and less than 7% of the people along the 285 corridor confess Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. So what do they worship? Well many of them will tell you that they don't need to worship a God because they believe that they have evolved to be smarter than the old ways of their parents and grandparents. It's sad to think that the devil has convinced more than 90% of the people along the 285 corridor that God's Word is not true and that they have no need for a Lord and Savior because they are in control of their own lives and smarter than the generations before them. Oh some of them will

admit that their god is their own abilities, sports or other heroes of the time or the inner peace that they find in nature; but they are really no better off than the philosophers of the Apostle Paul's time in Athens. Why are people today so afraid of searching the Words of God to come to understand of the truth of God and His love for them?

The Apostle Paul tells the philosophers of his times, ***“The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, [25] nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. [26] 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, [27] 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, [28] 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.’”*** (Acts 17:24 -28)

The misguided philosophies of today are no different than the philosophies of the past. They don't understand who God is because they don't want God's Word to be true, so they either don't read God's Word or try to understand that God didn't make us to serve Him but to live in His love, grace and mercy with Him. We all live in this world because of God's great love for us, not because we have evolved into a great generation of people. God has through the generations of time been showing us who He is, even when we don't look for Him or learn from His Word, so that we will have a hope in a world that is hopelessly lost. Oh, everyone knows in their inner-being that there is something greater than them, who has created and kept this universe living and breathing, because it is beyond our mind's understanding how everything works and lives and grows. This God that all the world is looking for ***“is actually not far from each one of us, [28] for ‘In God we live and move and have our being’”*** (Acts 17:27-28)

What does the Apostle Paul mean when he says, ***“In God we live and move and have our being,”*** or the fact that ***“we are indeed God's offspring?”*** (Acts 17:28) Well God's Word tells us that God brought us into this world with a purpose and that purpose was to live in His love, grace and mercy so that we can share His love, grace and mercy with others, so that they too will come to know the love, peace and comfort that God wants us all to live in now and for all eternity.

What is God's Love, grace and mercy? Well it comes down from God who created us by His own hands, from the creation that He made for us to live in with Him. God created us to live in His love and the only way we can share that love with Him is to have a free will. Now our free will has led us away from our creator and His love for us, which brings us to death and the loss of God in our lives. Still because of God's great love for us ***“He gave His one and only Son, (Jesus Christ) so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God didn't send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. <sup>18</sup> So whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.”*** (John 3:16 – 18) Through the life, Death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God showed us just how great His love is for each and every one of us and how great God's

desire is to have each and every one of us living in His love, grace and mercy now and for all eternity.

Our being in this world is limited because of our sin. Sin that not only leads us to death and the destruction of the creation that God has made for us, but also our own eternal destruction as the Apostle Paul warns the philosophers of His time, ***“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. [30] The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, [31] 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.”*** (Acts 17:29 – 31)

God in all His wisdom has shown us that life in this world of sin and death doesn’t go on forever without Him. Jesus is our hope and our life if we let Him be our being. For as God through Jesus Christ lives in us, we have life eternal and the desire to share that Love of God with others just as God has shared His love with us. We are God’s offspring, all of us in this world, and God wants all of us to live with Him, but there is a fixed time when each and every one of us will have to answer the question, “Do you want to live with your creator God?” For all those who turn from their sinful ways and look to God for His love, grace and mercy, which is repentance, they will have eternal life, but for all those who will not put their trust in God’s love, grace and mercy there is no life, because in God we live and without God there is only death. So do you want to live with your creator God? It’s your choice and it makes a difference in your life!

What can we learn from the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Acts of the Apostles? We can learn that just as the Apostle Paul shared God’s love, grace and mercy with a world that was lost in the darkness of their own philosophies, so we too are given the opportunities to share the love, grace and mercy of God with others who are lost in the darkness of this world. We might not be able to persuade them that in God we live, but we need to share with them the Good News of the life, peace and comfort that God has given to all of us through His Son, Jesus Christ, by our words, actions and love for them. Yes, in God we live now and for all eternity and it is in the love, grace and mercy of God that we desire that all of mankind live, for without God there is only death.

So let God live in you and you will live in God’s love, peace and comfort now and forever and it will be shown to others by your life, your words and your actions towards them. Amen.