

“Altars to the Unknown God”
(19th in our series, *Jesus Everywhere*)

Acts 17:16-34*

Pastor Peter Hiett

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**All scriptures are ESV unless otherwise noted.*

Opening

This sermon is #19 in our mini-series *Jesus Everywhere* and the sermons are building on each other. So if you feel lost, I highly encourage you to visit our website where all the sermon videos are posted. [relentless-love.org].

Let's pray.

Sermon

Clip from movie *Titanic*

[Scene of Rose on the piece of lumber holding on to Jack as he begins to sink beneath the surface of the water.]

Rose: *I'll never let go. I promise.* [Rose kisses Jack's hand and cries as he sinks beneath the surface of the water.]

Clip from movie *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*

[The Fellowship is running from the Balrog across the bridge of Khazad-Dum. Gandalf stands between the evil Balrog and the Fellowship and prevents the Balrog from crossing the bridge. Gandalf put holds a sword and his staff and plunges them into the bridge and yells.]

Gandalf the wizard: *You shall not pass.*

[The bridge collapses and the Balrog appears to fall into the chasm. However, the Balrog sends up a swirl of light that wraps around Gandalf and Gandalf sacrifices himself for the sake of the Fellowship.]

Clip from movie *Braveheart*

[William Wallace is lying on the stone used for beheading. He has been tortured publicly and now will be beheaded publicly. He tries to speak and is given acknowledgement that he wants to say a word before losing his head. He struggles to get the word out but then loudly yells.]

William Wallace: *Freeeeeeedommmmmmmmm!*

[As William is screaming, the scenes change to other people that appear to hear his scream and are impacted.]

Clip from movie *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*

[The scene takes place in the courtyard of the Great Hall.]

Lord Voldemort: *Harry Potter... the boy who lived, come to die.*

[Lord Voldemort curses Harry Potter and strikes him with light from his wand.]

Clip from movie *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*

[Dr. Evil is playing the piano (Mini-Me is playing a tiny piano that is sitting on top of Dr. Evil's piano) and singing "What if God was one of us?" Number 2 and Frau Farbissina look on.]

Number 2: Dr. Evil, that was fantastic.

Dr. Evil: Thank you, Number 2. I wrote that.

There are just a few video clips that we looked at last week plus Dr. Evil singing "What if God was one of us?"

And "What if God was one of us?" What if God showed up in our society somehow? Would we recognize Him? We're the people that say He did become one of us. He ate our food, walked our roads, dressed in our clothes, spoke our language – He even told our stories – usually with a little twist. Some recognized Him – most didn't.

- What if God showed up in Denver or Hollywood today?
- What would He look like?
- What would He say to our culture?
- What would He have to say about a popular movie like *Titanic*, that graphically portrays adultery and licentiousness?
- or How about a movie like *The Lord of the Rings* filled with pagan mysticism and mythology?
- or How about an R-rated movie like *Braveheart* filled with graphic violence?
- or How about *Harry Potter*?

You remember how Christians complained about *Harry Potter* ... and for good reason – witchcraft really does serve demons. I've witnessed it. Believe me – it's Evil.

What if Jesus walked into Hollywood or Denver? Remember when He (the God-Man) went to Sodom? Eternal Fire consumed that city. Maybe He'd call down Fire; maybe He'd go to war.

Ancient Moab must've been something like Sodom. Last week we looked at 2Kings 3 – Israel went to war Moab, commissioned by God, through Elisha and they were winning the war until King Mesha of Moab sacrificed his son, who was to reign in his place. And the wrath (which appears to be God's wrath) turned upon Israel!!!

Well sacrificing a child to a pagan idol is profoundly evil.

Yet, maybe King Mesha sacrificed the son he loved to save the nation he loved.

Like Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac and for that, the whole world is blessed.

Like God, the Father sacrificed God, the Son, and saved all humanity.

I mean maybe, partly, that sacrifice was painful love, surrendered to the Unknown God, who is Love and so Moab and Israel were saved ...

We scratched our heads last week and thought "That story really does sound familiar, but it happened in Moab ... drenched in Evil??"

I mean it's kind of like Dr. Evil singing "What if God was one of us?" in an Austin Powers movie. What do you do with that? Say to that?

What would you say if you were an evangelist to Moab? Would you say

"Repent 'cause you people don't have a clue about the love of God and the sacrifice He made for you ... He gave His only Son. You don't understand."

What would you say if you were an evangelist to India, like my friend Andrew and you met the woman I told you about last week – the woman which just sacrificed her child to Shiva? What would you say?

"Repent 'cause you have no clue as to who God is" or "Repent 'cause you know something about the very heart of God – the God who sacrificed His son – so that you could hold your son once again and forever."

Well after the service last week, my friend Perry said, "Wow. That's fascinating – but do you find this sort of thing anywhere in the New Testament?" And I said, "Yep. Acts 17."

Acts is the story of the Church invading this world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Fire that is His Spirit.

Acts 17:16

¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for them [That's Silas and Timothy.] at Athens [Paul has a small layover in Athens.], his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.

Paul was provoked "Paroxynō." It's where we get our word "paroxysm." Paul gets angry because the city is full of idols.

Idolatry is a violation of the 1st Commandment and greatest Commandment:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me" for

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul and strength."

Chemosh in Moab was an idol. Shiva in India is an idol. Savings accounts, new cars, football teams, governments, philosophical ideas, other people, even Religion can also be idols. Idolatry is misdirected worship.

You and I were made to worship and in the absence of the true God ... we will find a god and worship.

To worship is to sacrifice. It is to offer one's life. All over the world, people worship and people sacrifice to something.

And if it's not God, it's an idol.

We destroy idols and idols destroy us. For example:

If you worship sex, you'll destroy sex and sex will destroy you.

Worship an idol, and you'll destroy the idol and the idol will destroy you.

You will give your life and it will take your life and never give it back ...

So Paul enters Athens, sees the idolatry, and grows furious ...

And remember that for Paul ...

Athens was not a tourist destination that brought up memories of *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* and tourists jumping off tour buses to visit the Acropolis.

For Jews, Athens was every bit as vile as old Kir-hareseth in Moab. Athens was the heart of the Evil Empire.

The New Testament is written in Greek, due to the fact that in 332BC Alexander the Great's armies captured Jerusalem. In 175 B.C. , the Greek ruler Antiochus Epiphanies IV, outlawed the worship of Yahweh – massacred countless thousands of Jews and sacrificed pigs to the Greek god Zeus on a pagan altar that he erected in the Temple in Jerusalem. Zeus was the high god of the Pagan Pantheon.

Ares was the god of war. In Paul's time, he was known by his Roman name, Mars. When Roman generals won a battle, it was traditional to take the foreign commander and ritually strangle him before a statue of Mars. In the middle of Athens was a rock hill called Mars Hill or in Greek, the Areopagus (Ares Rock).

[Image of Mars Hill]

This is Mars Hill viewed from the Acropolis. The leaders of Athens met in council on that hill for hundreds of years. All over that hill and all over that city were countless idols and Paul had a Paroxysm. I hope you have a Paroxysm (but what do you do with it?).

Paul had a Paroxysm (I think he felt the very wrath of God). He wanted to go to war with the god of war. He wanted to call down fire ... and maybe he did. Next verse – 17

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.

He reasoned – *dialegomai* – where we get our word *dialogue*, like the Socratic Method – reasoned dialogue. He dialogued – not *“monologued.”* You *monologue* to proclaim Truth – you *dialogue* to find Truth ... What the hell is Paul doing dialoguing with idolaters in Athens? Next verse:

¹⁸Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babbling wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities” – because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

Paul had a Proxysm and so he engaged in *“reasonable dialogue.”* It's not something Evangelical American Christians are known for – But Paul dialogued with everyone in the Marketplace and he dialogued with Philosophers.

Athens had been home to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

Aristotle is the Father of modern science. That can certainly be an idol.

Philosophy can certainly be an idol.

Yet Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle all postulated the existence of an “Unknown Creator” they referred to as “Theos” – not a god – the God.

In fact, Socrates was tried on the Areopagus 450 years before Paul and Socrates was executed for failing to acknowledge the gods of Athens and for introducing strange new gods – like this Theos.

Paul dialogued with the Philosophers, including Epicurean Philosophers who believed “the good” was to maximize pleasure. Pleasure can certainly be an idol. And yet the Epicureans described the greatest pleasure as this Blessedness and Happiness that comes to those who hunger and thirst for Righteousness.

Paul dialogued with the Stoics, who had a great deal of faith in Reason. Human reason can certainly be an idol. The Stoics believed that reason was like the “Substance of God” and “Breath of God” – breathed into every person. And so in every person there was, like, a seed of this Reason and this Reason was Fire ... they said we all came from that Fire and would return to that Fire. God is that Fire.

As Aratus, one of their poets, wrote, “*We are indeed His offspring.*” The Stoics had a word for the Substance of God; this all-pervasive, fiery, divine reason. The word was “logos,” translated “word” in your Bible.

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

Paul dialogued in the marketplace and the synagogue. You know just as the Philosophers are all about obtaining “the knowledge of good and evil;” so is Religion and Religion is perhaps the most dangerous of all idols.

Paul dialogued and learned about idolaters in Athens and he learned about a Greek poet named Epimenides who in the 6th century B. C. wrote a poem about Zeus and how the men of Crete thought he was mortal.

Epimenides wrote

They fashioned a tomb for you, holy and high one. Cretans always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies. But you are not dead: you live and abide forever. For in you we live and move and have our being.

Wow! Where would an old pagan poet get an idea like that???? Well Paul dialogued and learned the word of Epimenides and he learned a legend about Epimenides. According to Diogenes Laertius (a 3rd century Greek historian) and also some references in Plato, Aristotle, and others:

A great plague fell like a curse, upon the city of Athens, sometime along about 600 B.C. Horrified at the devastation, the Council Areopagus on Mars Hill, sent a man named Nicias on a desperate journey to the Pythian oracle, where a pagan priestess informed Nicias that Athens was being punished for the sins of one of their former kings. The oracle didn't know the name of the god that was punishing Athens but the priestess told Nicias that there was a man on the island of Crete who would know how to make atonement to this God – the man's name was Epimenides. A short time later Nicias and Epimenides walked into Athens.

[Like Paul, Epimenides must have been shocked at the idols. People said, “There are more gods in Athens than men.”]

In the morning, Epimenides gathered the Council on Mars Hill. He had instructed some to bring a flock of sheep or lambs. It appears Epimenides addressed the Council with something like the following proposition.

[This is the way it's recounted in Don Richardson's book *Eternity in Their Hearts*. (A book I highly recommend.)]

Well Epimenides stood on Mars Hill and said something like this: “Athenians you've already sacrificed to every god you know ... So I propose that there is at least one god you don't know and that this god is great enough and good enough to forgive your crimes and stop this plague –

if you'd only seek his favor. And, so Epimenides commanded servants to release the lambs praying "Unknown god, choose your atonement." Wherever a lamb laid down on the grass rather than feeding on the grass, Epimenides instructed artisans to build an altar, and there they sacrificed that lamb as an atonement to the Unknown God. As they did that, the plague began to lift.

Ancient authors wrote of these "altars to the unknown god" "sacrificed throughout Athens." Obviously, many fell into disrepair, but sometime over the ensuing 600 years, one of these altars was maintained and preserved apparently with the hope that one day the "unknown god" would be revealed and that if and when he was revealed, the Athenians would remember that he was no stranger to their city but that with lamb's blood once before, he had redeemed them from a curse.

Paul must have heard that story and now 600 years later, Acts 17, a strange Jewish Rabi comes to town and starts dialoguing. Verse 19

¹⁹And they took hold of him and brought him to the Areopagus [that's Mars Hill] 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. [So Paul has a Paroxysm; Paul dialogues; and now Paul preaches.]

²²So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus [heart of the Evil Empire] 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 [the "Theos"] 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 [Which man do you suppose he's talking about – the First Adam or the Last Adam?] 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;

[Paul isn't quoting the Bible. He's quoting Epimenides. Yet now the words of Epimenides are in the Bible. That means in 600 B. C. in pagan Greece, a pagan poet spoke the Word of God – the Logos of God – the Logos that became flesh and dwelt among us full of Grace and Truth. Logos incarnos – Jesus.]

As even some of your own poets have said, [Now Paul is quoting Aratus. "We" – that's Jews and unconverted Greeks.] "For we are indeed his offspring. ²⁹Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being [The "theion" which is also translated "brimstone" – the fiery substance of God.] 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." ³²Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." ³³So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Acts 17:19-34

Now check this out:

[Image of Mars Hill]

This is Mars Hill today – tour buses drop people off in this parking lot. But there are no altars to pagan deities. Any you won't find foreign dignitaries being ritually strangled there to the glory of Mars. But you will find this bronze plaque (You can see some tourist reading it there on the right.) The text on the plaque is Acts 17:22-30 – what we just read. It's the Word of God ... through St. Paul, Aratus, and Epimenides. And the Word of God is the Logos of God; Fire from the mouth of God.

So, Paul had a Paroxysm. He dialogued. He found the altar. He preached and the Fire fell, consuming the sacrifices including Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris and maybe that tourist in the blue shirt reading the Word in that picture.

See? I think Paul did go to war and Paul did call down fire upon an altar God had been building for at least 600 years.

See? God not only builds altars on Mt. Zion but also on Mars Hill.

Through ancient plagues and little lambs;
Through pagan poets writing poems about Zeus;
Through Greek Philosophers like Socrates willing to die for the Way and the Truth;
Through Epicureans and Stoics contemplating Joy and the Logos;
Even through Alexander and Antiochus Epiphanies IV and the sack of Jerusalem and the worship of Mars.

All along God had been building an altar to the "Unknown God."

Paul didn't know where the altar was but he did know that Jesus is the Lamb who takes away the Sin of the World and Jesus is the Logos that enlightens all men and Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. So Jesus arrived in Athens long before Paul. And so believing God had always been at work in Athens, Paul figured there'd be some kind of "Altar to the Unknown God;" he just had to find it and fill in the blank saying:

"What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. It's good news. His name is Jesus and it means God saves."

For 600 years, really for thousands of years, God had been constructing an altar. Why? Why construct an altar to an Unknown God? Well because ... "He made from one Adam every nation ... that they should seek Him (want Him, desire Him, yearn for Him) seek Him and find Him." Literally "that they might perhaps, if possible, seek" (it's the optative tense).

It's like Paul is aware of his own words in Romans 3 – "No one seeks God" - so how can they seek?

Jesus said "No one comes to the Father but by me."

So how could Socrates, Epimenides, and Aratus seek God? Only through the Spirit of Jesus – the Word – the Logos.

John 1:1 *"In the beginning was the Logos and the Logos was with God and the Logos was God. All things were made through Him and without Him was not anything made."*

That includes “altars to the Unknown God.” And the Faith, Hope, and Love that makes us seek God and the people that preach the Word of God and the new us that is born of God by the Word of God. It’s Jesus, the Word of God, that “seeks and saves the lost.”

Like Paul said, “God is not served by human hands as if He needed anything.”

- Do you think God needs you – to preach the Gospel?
- Was God dependent on Paul to preach the Gospel?

Some people say “Why should I preach the Gospel if God doesn’t need me to preach the Gospel?” I don’t think those people believe the Gospel and so don’t want to preach the Gospel. Gospel means good news, “evangelium” in Greek; its where we get the word “Evangelical.”

When the kids were little and Susan was having a bad day, which was usually because of me, and because we had argued and so Susan was hurting for some atonement and reconciliation. Sometimes (at the right time), I’d grab one of the kids, run to the store, and buy Susan some flowers. When we’d get home I’d say to Jon (Beth, Becky, or Coleman), “Hey would you like to hand Mommy the flowers?” Now I dated the woman; I married the bride; I drove the car; I paid for the flowers; I arranged everything. It was my decision; my judgment to buy flowers, but then I’d say, “Hey Jonathan, (Elizabeth, Becky, Coleman) – do you wanna hand Mommy the flowers?” They never ever said “No” because they knew the flowers were Good News.

But imagine if I said, “Jon tell Mommy these flowers are for her and ‘I love her’ provided she says, ‘I’m sorry’ and shows significant remorse. And if she doesn’t, tell her I’m coming to take the flowers back ‘cause I hate her and will never stop hating her. Now I need you Jonathan to convince her to accept this Good News.” Well I bet, in that scenario. Jon would prefer to not hand her the flowers.

Well for thousands of years, God arranged everything, paid for everything, and then at the right time said, “Look Paul – her hands are empty. See the tears in her eyes. Now Paul – preach the Gospel. Now Paul, hand her the flowers. It’s Eternal Gospel Paul. That means my decision is final – it will not change.”

See? It really is Good News and yet Good News can be Judgment.

- Have you ever been angry at your husband and received a beautiful bouquet of flowers from your husband?
- Have you ever hated someone, and then that someone does something super nice for you?
- Have you ever been forgiven when you didn’t want to be forgiven – it burns doesn’t it?

See? You may be forgiven and yet refuse to accept it and sit in outer darkness. You may choose to hate the flowers even if (especially if) he won’t take them back.

Paul says, “Repent (change your way of thinking). God doesn’t need you to serve Him like you serve these idols. Repent because God has fixed a day in which (not on which) He will judge. (Actually that’s a curious Greek phrase that doesn’t really mean “will judge.” It’s a present verb followed by a present active infinitive meaning “He is about” or “He is at the point of judging the world.”) So Paul is saying “Repent because God has fixed a day in which He is at the point of judging the world in righteousness by (or more literally) in a man.” So God judges the world in a day, in a man, beginning now ... as you hear this Word.

Jesus said He judged no one. Yet He is the Judgment and at the day of His crucifixion He said, “Now is the Judgment of the World.” It’s an Eternal day intersecting all temporal reality.”

So do you understand? Jesus is the Father’s Eternal Bouquet of Flowers.

Jesus crucified and risen from the dead

is the Father’s Judgment of you and all the children of Adam.

Jesus is what we are all looking for

He completes us – in the image of God.

And all around you God has prepared altars – “Altars to the unknown God.”

The Bride meets the Bridegroom at the Altar. And we have been given “the ministry of Reconciliation.”

So He says to you – “Go find those altars.” “Find the empty hands and empty hearts longing for Mercy and hand my Bride the flowers.” That is “Preach the Gospel that the unknown God would become the Known God. I meet my Bride at the Altar.”

This world is full of altars to the unknown God in Mythology, History, Philosophy and Science – but sadly we’re often too frightened to dialogue and find those altars so we just yell, issue threats, and never preach Good News.

Every movie, every story is an “altar to the unknown God” or it’s not a story.

Can you think of a story where someone doesn’t seek “the Way, the Truth, or the Life” and Jesus is “the Way, the Truth and the Life.”

Can you think of a story where someone doesn’t sacrifice for Love and God is Love?

Sure they depict Sin and Evil, but without Sin and Evil, how could you ever tell the story of Grace. The Gospel is Grace.

Gandalf, Jack, William Wallace, Harry Potter – each is an altar to the unknown God. So in this hidden way, God is coming to Hollywood and Denver all the time (invading our imagination all the time). And God is coming to Hollywood and Denver all the time in you – even as you. When you say “You adore Gandalf, Jack, William and Harry – that which you worship as unknown, I declare to you.

Remember that part in the movie where Harry freely chooses to lay down his life to save the world from Evil Voldemort?

That’s not just a story – that really happened from the foundation of the World. It’s just his name wasn’t Harry.

And remember how when Voldemort killed Harry, he signed his own Death Warrant and Harry rose from the dead.

That’s not just a story – that really happened on a Cross 2,000 years ago.

“What you worship as unknown, this I declare to you ...”

“Here – have some flowers.”

So what am I saying?

1. Never, ever practice witchcraft.
2. Go see Harry Potter movies looking for Jesus.

I found a website last week where they were arguing that C. S. Lewis was an evil heretic because JK Rowling said that she found his Narnia books an inspiration. How backwards is that?
We're not on the losing team – we've already won.

Every city must contain an "Altar to the unknown God." Even Kir-hara-seth in Moab must contain an altar to the unknown God of Love.

Even Sodom has an altar or is an altar. Scripture says "Sodom will be restored" and that Jesus preaches to the "spirits in prison." Maybe even in Hades or with Hades – God still builds that altar – preparing the hearts in outer darkness for the Revelation of His Mercy when death is consumed by Life and darkness by Light.

Maybe this whole world is like an altar to the unknown God – prepared through all the days of time until it's flooded with Eternal Fire and this earth will be full of the Knowledge of God (the formerly unknown God) as the waters cover the sea.

Every heart contains an "Altar to the unknown God." Perhaps each of us is an "Altar to the unknown God" for God has made us to "seek after Him – hoping to find Him."

So don't yell at people ... condemn people ... go to war with people ... or call fire down on people – Dialogue with people until you find their "altar to the unknown God." Then preach saying *"That which you worship as unknown; this I proclaim to you ..."*

And now let me warn you. That place where they worship the "unknown God" may look like an idol. The idol forms the altar on which the Glory of God is revealed. The idol is Sin and the Glory of God is Grace. An idol is misdirected worship.

Every murderer longs for something – even worships – Judgment (that's why they murder) and Jesus is the Judgment of Grace they truly long for.

Every sex addict longs for communion (that's why they sleep around) and Jesus is the Communion of Grace.

Every addict longs for freedom (that's why they abuse drugs) and Jesus is the Freedom of Grace.

Every person tries to create themselves in the image of God with the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They idolize – their own judgments and that's Sin ...

And yet it reveals the Judgment of God – that's Grace and Grace makes us in the image of God.

You see for all of time God has been building an altar in our hearts and an altar on Mt. Zion. It started as a tree in a garden – "the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." In ancient Israel, they knew it as the Law. They took Knowledge and they thought they fulfilled the Law. They thought they knew God – but He was still the Unknown God. And He kept building the Altar

- through Abraham
- through Moses
- through David and Solomon
- through the Law and the Prophets
- through a zillion rituals in the ancient stone temple involving birds and lambs and scapegoats and priests and blood
- through exile, destruction and reconstruction

– through Greeks and Romans

He built the Altar and with our sin, He built the Altar until that day ... that Friday in 33 A.D. when it was finished and He cried from the Cross, *"It is finished."*

See every Altar is that Altar.

We all meet the Bridegroom at that Altar ... for at that Altar the sins of the world are consumed by Love

And God is Love

Grace is His Judgment.

We are judged in Christ Jesus at His Cross in that Day. He bears our sin to destruction and He gives us His Life

and we give Him our Life and that is Life

A Communion of Love called Life.

And there The Unknown God becomes The Known God.

[Peter walks up to the Communion Table.] This is that Altar.

Communion

And in that day, that night (which to the Hebrews is the beginning of the day), He took bread and He broke it saying, *"This is My body given to you. Take it; eat it."* And in the same way, after supper, having given thanks, He took the cup and He said, *"This cup is the Covenant, the New Covenant, in My blood; poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Drink of it all of you and do it in remembrance of Me."*

"Come, let us reason together though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow."

We reason with others because He first reasoned with us ...

We dialogue with others because He first dialogued with us ...

We love others because He first loved us.

So your life really is like an altar and on that altar is the Self you have built with your judgments, your pride, your arrogance. Well come meet Jesus at this Altar [Peter touches the Cross.] and present yourself as a Living Sacrifice and call upon the Fire of God (which is the Mercy of God) and you die with Jesus and you rise with Jesus to an Eternal Communion of Love – which is Life. You see you can start right now ... at this table ... in your heart ... and one day everything you have will be Fire. In Jesus' name, let's pray. So just say this after me

Lord Jesus you are good. [You can say it aloud.] Lord Jesus you are good. So I surrender my Self. Thank you for giving me Your Self. You are my Savior; You are my Lord. Amen.

Do you see to the extent that He goes to reveal to you His Love – they're [the bread and the cup] the Love of God ... for you? Believe it and live it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Benediction and Prayer

Well imagine how Paul felt when he first stepped foot in Greece, being a Jew. And imagine how Paul felt when those dudes came and got him and started to drag him off to Mars Hill (God of War Hill). Don't you think he'd be terrified? Or at least be tempted to be terrified. And yet Paul knew something ... he knew that Jesus had gotten there first. And you know your life is a little like Paul's life. When you step into another person's life, a lot of times it's like *"Oh my gosh –*

this is like the Hill of War or something.” But have courage ‘cause Jesus has been there first. Look for the Altar to the Unknown God.

Stepping into your future is a little bit like that. I mean if you’re like me – *“Gosh I don’t want to step into the future”* but Jesus has been there first preparing altars for the Unknown God. And sometimes I don’t want to step into the future because I think to myself *“God I’ll screw up; I’ll mess up; I’ll sin.”* And He knows that and you know what He’ll do with that sin – He’ll build an Altar to the Unknown God so that He will become the Known God so that you will no longer want to sin. You see Jesus is before you, behind you, all around you – making you in His Image so have courage.

If you look at the life of Paul, he went through some pretty crazy stuff. I mean after he stepped foot in Greece, he stepped foot in all sorts of countries all through the Roman Empire; he was beaten, he was flogged but he knew that Jesus had been there first. One day he decided to go to Jerusalem because he thought Jesus wanted him to go to Jerusalem. People prophesied, *“You go to Jerusalem – you’ll be bound up – they’ll beat you; they’ll bind you.”* People said *“Don’t go to Jerusalem,”* but Paul knew Jesus had been there first. Then they dragged him off and the tradition is that they finally beheaded him in Rome and yet I think Paul had some fear and yet he went with courage ‘cause he knew that Jesus had been there first. He died with Peter in Rome; He died with Paul in Rome and He’s the one that makes all things new.

So I’m just saying ... As you leave this place, step out with courage ‘cause Jesus has been there first. And hand people the flowers – just hand them the flowers. You’re not the Judge, you’re the little kid delivering the flowers, and it’s Good News. In His name, Amen.

Disclaimer: The author has not edited this document. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio or video version of the sermon on this website and don’t be shy about informing us of errors.

