

SERMON NOTES 3 July 2022

sunnysidechurch

Places of Encounter

Bible Readings: Acts 17:16-21 and Luke 10:1-12

Questions for Discussion

1. What similarities do you see from the Athens that Paul encountered with what we encounter today.
2. Paul first went to the synagogue. How can we draw from our worship and life together what we need the good news of Christ and his resurrection
3. The “market place” can be seen as any place where we go to conduct our daily business of living and the place where we can meet people. Share your experiences of the “market place”
4. The “Areopagus” had become the place in Athens where people shared their experience of the big issues of life. It was the place where Paul was specifically invited to share “this new teaching that he was presenting.” Where are the places like the Areopagus today and how can we make use of them in sharing our faith.
5. In Luke 10 Jesus reminds us that the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. We are called first to pray and then to go. What are our pathways as we respond to this?

Main points of the sermon

When Paul arrived in Athens he encountered a new situation for him which has similarities with what we face today. Unlike 60 years ago most people today have only a rudimentary knowledge of the life of Jesus, and diverse understandings of who we mean by God,

In this mini series we will hear how Paul met the situation in Athens and what we can learn about how we can share Jesus with others and what our “pathways” might be.

Today we are looking at “places of encounter”. Many see Athens as the cradle of western civilisation, but its great philosophers and teachers were from 400 years before Paul’s visit. Paul was distressed to see that Athens was full of idols which many people worshipped.

Paul started by visiting the synagogue. Here he would have met with his fellow Jews and God-fearing Greeks, but they were a minority in Athens. Here he would have been able to establish contacts and this helped him to prepare for his task.

Paul then goes to the market place where he encounters some of the contemporary thinkers. He debates with them, but they regard him as a “babbler” and a preacher of foreign gods. They could not understand Paul’s message about Jesus and the resurrection.

Paul was then taken to a meeting of the Areopagus. In the centuries past this had been the governing body of a Greek city, it had now become a place where matters of religion and morals were discussed. They considered themselves to be custodians of the teachings about new religions and foreign gods. Next week we will hear what Paul said to them.

In today’s gospel reading from Luke 10 we are reminded that the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. We are called first to pray and then to go. Paul went to the places that mattered in Athens, the synagogue, the market place, and he accepted the invitation to the Areopagus. There are equivalent places for us to go today. These are our places of encounter as we witness to the good news of Jesus and the resurrection

