

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen

Who is it you worship?

- I don't mean, like, who is your idol.....or.....who is it you really think a lot of?

I mean who is it YOU REALLY WORSHIP?

- We have a lot of choices don't we?

And perhaps sitting here this morning, you are in church or viewing our live stream, and I thank you for that; but from your viewpoint the answer seems simple.

- Of course, Pastor, I worship God.....or even your response might be the second person of the Trinity, Jesus.
- But I'm not sure that is always the case.

We all struggle with this.....and I include myself at the top of that list.

- Oh, I attend church, I believe in the Triune God.....but then I allow other gods into my life.
- And truth be known....we all do that.
- If we could somehow keep the First Commandment.....all the other commandments would fall in place and be kept also.
- There is a very good and important reason the First Commandment is the first commandment.
- "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."

Apparently that is how it was for the men of Athens in our first reading for today.

- The apostle Paul I don't think was a very patient, stand around and do nothing kind of guy.

Paul was in Berea proclaiming the Gospel and men from Thessalonica heard about this and came there to cause trouble.

- Agitating and stirring up the crowds.
- So the brothers sent Paul off to the sea to have him meet up with Silas and Timothy.
- They took him as far as Athens and then departed from him.....
- For Paul to wait there for Silas and Timothy.

And while Paul is in Athens waiting for Silas and Timothy he is provoked.

- He walks around the city and sees that it is full of idols.
- So many gods that he even sees an altar to the unknown god in case they missed one.
- So many false gods to worship that they even make provisions in case they missed one.

Paul proclaims a risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to them.

- These people thought they were so smart that they sat around doing nothing but talking or hearing about new things.
- Paul talks about a resurrected Lord which is new to them so they invited him to speak at the Areopagus, or for you that are a little bit older, you may have heard it called Mars Hill.

And Paul gives in the second half of our first reading for today, inspired by the Holy Spirit, what is considered to be one of the best sermons ever given.

- One that seminary students look at and consider as they work their way through their homiletics or sermon preparation and delivery courses.

Paul begins.....

- Men of Athens, I perceive you are in every way religious.
- He could say that to us today.
- We are here.
- I think we perceive of ourselves as religious people.

Paul then talked about the altar he found with the inscription to the unknown god.

- Remember where I began this message.....
- What/who are the gods you worship?

We have other gods.....

- The person who is addicted/dependent on whatever it is they are addicted to.
- Alcohol, drugs, work, the internet, TV..... You fill in the blank, whatever it is.
- Their god is whatever they are addicted to.
- Whatever has taken room in their heart from God. Whatever it is they trust and worship.

Other gods we have.....

- The one who stayed away from God's house for entertainment.
- Their entertainment becomes a god they worship.

How about the one who missed being in God's House, in His Word, because of house work, yard work, washing the car, etc.

- Their possessions have become one of the gods they worship.

There are those who cower under to public opinions, or persecution from others.

- Those other things influencing them, how they act and what they do has become their god.

How about the one who is consumed with worry and fears?

- Perhaps rather than trusting in the One, True, Triune God, they put their trust in themselves and their own shoulders.
- Their own self has become their god.

Or the one who has given in to worldly temptations.

- Their own desires and the evil one has become their god.

You fill in the blank.

- Whatever is taking the place of God or shoving Him aside in your heart.....
- That is the god who you are worshipping.
- And we have many of them.

And perhaps just as important a question as who is your god.....is why is he or she or it your god?

- Because that is who you put your hope and trust in. That is who you think can most help you and get you what you want.
- Martin Luther said, "To whatever you look to for any good thing and for refuge in every need, that is what is meant by "god."
- And he added to that, that we are to see to it that we let the One True God alone be our God, and never look for another.

Your god is the one that you think will get you what you are after.

- And what is so particularly absurd about all those other gods is that they are the ones we have made up.
- They even have become part of our imagination.

Paul continues on in his sermon.....

- He says we need to worship the One who is our Creator.
- When we create these gods, we try to take the place of our Creator.
- We try to become the creator.

Paul says we ought not think the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, or an image formed by the art and imagination of man.

- Rather, our God is the Creator of the heaven and earth.
- He is the Creator of you and me.
- And He came to us in the flesh.
- And He gave His life for us and took it up again.

We heard Him say last week, “He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

- We are not served by human hands.....we are served by the One who created the human hands.

And Paul continued on.....

- He, this Jesus, is not far from you.
- Paul says in Him we live and move and have our being.
- We are indeed His offspring.

In Him we have our hope. He is the reason for our hope, and He is our hope.

- We worship our reason for, and the one who is our.....HOPE.

Let me direct your attention to our altar for a moment.

- And to do this I am going to do something I do not normally do. I trust you will understand and indulge me this morning.
- I’m going to step out of the pulpit. I want to make sure you see what I am talking about.

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Remember Paul made reference to an inscription he found on one of the altars in Athens.....

- To the unknown god.

Look at the description on our altar.....

- It is Chi, Rho.
- It look like a p.....Rho

- With an X through it, or in front of it.
- Chi

These are the Greek letters Chi-Rho.

- It is as if in English we are writing CHR. The first letters of Christ.

That is who we say we look to. That is who we are to look to.

- That is who we worship.
- If you don't have a good look at it from the pew, I invite you when you come up for communion to look at it and reflect....and be reminded that is who we put our trust and hope in.....Jesus Christ.
- The one who again this day will give us His very body and blood to eat and to drink.

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Chi-Rho

- Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.
- That is who we worship. That is who we put our trust in.
- That is the inscription in our altar. That is where we find our hope. Our true hope.

Two final comments as I now begin to bring this message to a close.

- Have you noticed that the more Christ fills your heart, the more peace and joy and strength you have?

You are having something done that causes anxiety.

- The Pastor comes. Scripture is read to you.
- As Christ begins filling your heart, the anxiety lessens and the hope and peace increases.
- If that were able to be complete, you would be at perfect peace.

But that is hard to do, isn't it?

- A little anxiety remains, or creeps back in.
- To put our full hope, and trust in Christ is not always easy.
- The struggles and influences are real.....they are big and they are many.

But Christ has sent us also the Holy Spirit.

- We have celebrated Easter.

- We are now moving towards the bookend of Easter.....Pentecost.
- The outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit who through Word and Sacrament will create, sustain, and increase our faith that we more and more walk with Christ.

- You will see another invitation in our bulletin today to be in our Bible studies.
- If not already, please consider joining us.

We have Bible studies on Tuesday mornings at 10:00 a.m, Sunday mornings at 8:30 ahead of Church, and for men, the third Saturday of each month, next Saturday, for Men's Breakfast fellowship.

- And it would not bother me if we had more.
- In particular, I would love to see a women's Bible Study group get together each month as the men do.

Each of our Bible studies are constructed to be joyful, never putting anyone on the spot, and all of us growing in Christ. All of us, including your pastor, growing in Christ.

- We all learn together.
- It is through the Word and Sacrament that the Holy Spirit works.

I said 2 final thoughts.

- The second one.....our Lord works through means.

Today is Mother's Day.

- We give thanks for moms.

It is an interesting observation.....typically in the church on Mother's Day we get a little bump up in attendance.....

- And on Father's Day the opposite.
- Perhaps this says something about a mother's heart and their love for their children and being in the Lord's House.
- Perhaps to us men it says something about what we think is important and what we worship.

But as we thank our mothers.....we also recognize the importance of encouragement and influence of others.

- Let's all use this day as an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to God's Word and to inviting and influencing others to also be in God's Word.

The great minds of the age were there in Athens and they were listening to Paul.

- Some believed. Some did not.
- The Holy Spirit does not force but calls.

Who will you put your hope and trust in?

- Will you worship the One who is the real and true reason for our hope?
- Amen.

Please stand) And now, may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Having heard the Word of God we now prepare our hearts and minds to confess the words of the Nicene Creed as found on page 158 in your hymnal.