

*Intro:* It was an ordinary Sunday morning in early 18<sup>th</sup> century Germany when the pastor told his church of an island in the West Indies where there had never been a gospel witness. Specifically, the pastor spoke of an atheist slave owner with about 3,000 slaves who would live and die there with absolutely no chance of ever hearing the gospel. But there were two men who were deeply disturbed what they heard. John Leonard Dober & David Nitchman resolved to go to the island and take the gospel to these slaves. But how? Sell themselves into slavery. Against the will of many friends and family, Jon and David boarded the ship with the expectation that they would ever see these people again. As the ship began to creep away from the shore, the two men linked arms and one of them shouted back to those gathered on the shore: “May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward of his suffering.”

These two men understood that the slain Son of God, who sacrificed himself on the cross, is worthy, by virtue of his life, death, and resurrection to receive his reward. But what is his reward? Revelation 5 told us two weeks ago: **“Then I looked and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” (Revelation 5:11-12)** What is his reward? His praise!

This is what John Piper argues in the opening words to his excellent book on missions, *Let the Nations Be Glad:* **“Missions is not the ultimate goal of the Church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn’t. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever. Worship is the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white hot enjoyment of God’s glory.”**

That is what we are after here. That is why we started this church. The great motivator for our mission is not a bottom line. It is not a big crowd on Sundays. It is not recognition and accolades. The great motivator for our mission is that people would discover the worth of God in Christ and respond in worship! Over the past two weeks we have looked at “Worth Driven Worship” and “Gospel Driven Worship.” Today, we are going to focus on...

**“Worship Driven Mission”**  
**Acts 17:16-34**  
**September 2, 2012**

We are going to see that the...

**The Point: The desire for God to be worshiped should fuel our mission to make God known. (1x)**

Please open your Bibles to Acts 17, page \_\_\_\_ Context: Acts 1:8 – Paul was caught up by the mission of Jesus and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit pouring through him and his witness. The Book of Acts records the movement of the gospel from Jerusalem across the known world at that time. The key figures are Peter, whose ministry is the focus of the first 8 chapters, and Paul, whose three missionary journeys fill up the pages of chapters 9-28. Paul and his companions moved from city to city sharing the gospel and starting new churches, and Acts 17 tells us about one of Paul’s most notable efforts in the city of Athens on his 2nd missionary journey. This morning we are going to discover two truths that should motivate our mission here in Medford and Greater Boston. #1.

**I. Worship Driven Mission Begins with Jealousy for God’s Glory.**

- Look at v. 16. So Paul, after he had been persecuted in Thessalonica and Berea, arrived in Athens and decided to wait for Silas and Timothy to join him there, but while he was waiting for them in the city, he couldn’t help but see that the city was *full* of idols. It’s hard for us to imagine in America because the idols we love (sex, money, prestige, accomplishment) are often less visible on the surface, but this was not the case in Athens.
- Athens was one of the most influential cities in the world, and it exceeded all other cities in terms of idolatry. One ancient writer said, “it is easier to find a god [little g] there than a man.”

- And when Paul saw rampant idolatry of the Athenians, he was not just bothered, he was provoked. The word here means he was deeply distressed. He was moved to a righteous anger and jealousy. Let's be clear: there is sinful jealousy and there is godly jealousy.
- Jealousy refers to the "intolerance of rivals or competitors."
- What makes jealousy legitimate and good depends on whether or not the rival has any business to be there. This is why it is wrong for all of us to be jealous of \_\_\_ intellect, beauty, and skills because none of us can claim a monopoly in any of those areas, however much we think we should be able to! :) (Stott, 278)
- The difference here is that God rightfully exercises a monopoly on worship because he created us and made us for himself. God did not make us so that we would elevate all of these less than satisfying pursuits and pleasures above him.
- Paul knew that the first two of the ten commandments say: **"You shall have no other gods before me." 2) You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God.** (Ex 20:4-5)
- We were made to display the glory of God. That's worship. The issue in Athens is that the worship of God was not front and center. In fact, it wasn't even on the periphery, and it seems that we could conclude from v. 16 that it was not even on the map!

The great question for us to answer is this: Does it bother us when God does not receive the praise he so richly deserves? I believe there are three key reasons why we are not provoked by the idolatry around us:

- 1) Perhaps we are not jealous for his glory, because we fail to see how glorious he is. God is glorious! Make no mistake about it. He constantly receives glory (creation, angels, God is so bad – He reigns in heaven and glorifies himself – He exudes glory!)
- 2) Another reason we are not provoked by idolatry is that we are actively participating in it ourselves. We are not presenting our bodies as holy, acceptable and living sacrifices before God.
- 3) A third reason is that we have become desensitized to the world's infatuation with the world. In other words, what once bothered us is really not a big deal anymore. We are the proverbial frog in the kettle of American consumerism, religiosity, and watered down Christianity. Don't be satisfied with your pursuit of God or how God is using you today (and he wants to use you, all of you!). Press on to deeper depths and higher heights.

Listen to Frances Chan a couple of weeks ago, (by the way, I've started calling our youngest daughter Kesed, Frances Chan because she is "Crazy" and nothing but "Love"; Chan wrote a bestseller called *Crazy Love*)... Anyway, the real Frances Chan was making this great point that I had heard many times before, but I needed to hear it again (you know how that works?). He was describing his spiritual journey and how he's always longing for God to do something huge, Acts 4 kind of stuff, where the disciples are praying for boldness in the face of persecution and God shows up, physically shakes the place where they were gathering and pours out his Spirit on them so that they might continue to speak the Word with boldness, and Chan makes the point that many scholars and missiologists have made through the years, that we see God show up like that when he people are out there on mission with and for him, not when we are chilling out in our little Christian subculture saying: "Yeah, mission that is a great idea. Perhaps we will really get to that sometime in the near future."

A passion for God's glory must be the primary catalyst for mission. Mission exists because worship doesn't. Remember, I told you what Thomas Watson said about 350 years ago: "Glory renders us intensely zealous." Paul was so consumed with a passion for God and his glory that it moved him to respond, and that is what we see in verses 17ff.

## II. Worship driven mission ends with a clear witness to Christ (17-34)

### Read 17-21

You see, what we discover in verse 17 of our text is that Paul was so gripped by his love for God and a jealousy for God's glory, that it compelled him to acts. Unless we get step one, being jealous for God's glory, we will never move to step two.

In verses 22-31 we have a summary of Paul's address, and what I want to do here is examine his approach and address and draw out seven principles for our mission here in Medford and Greater Boston.

-- Get out of your circle of comfort. It is going to require some boldness at some point.

### 1) Declare Christ in the power of the Spirit.

- a. Acts 1:8 is the pivotal verse in the Book of Acts: **“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”**
- b. “The absolute highest value in personal evangelism is staying attuned to and cooperative with the Holy Spirit.” – Bill Hybels.
- c.

### 2) Declare Christ strategically and consistently.

- a. His method: synagogue – marketplace – Anywhere and everywhere.
- b. Paul’s zeal and passion was unmatched. He gives us the perfect picture of a zealous Christian.
- c. It says in verse 17, he reasoned with Jews in the synagogue and the Greeks in the marketplace “ He was strategic. He went to where the people were. What a novel idea!
- d. Not only was he strategic, he was consistent.
- e. Ed Stetzer, who heads up Lifeway Research, just released his findings three weeks ago that “80 percent of those who attend church one or more times a month (which, as a side note, is not cookies on the top shelf, you feel me?) those people believe they have a personal responsibility to share their faith, *but* 61 percent have not told another person about how to become a Christian in the previous six months.” To be honest, I’m surprised that number is not higher.
- f. Verse 17 goes on to say that Paul went to the synagogue and the marketplace “everyday.” Ev-er-ree-day. What if we had the attitude: Man, my day is not complete if I have not told someone about the life Jesus died to give.
- g. At the beginning of every week, I try to spend time prioritizing friends, people, who I know need Christ.... Plan, but also be ready for impromptu opportunities... Sometimes we call these divine appointments. Verse 17 says that Paul shared with “those who happened to be there.” In other words, whoever God brought his way, Paul was ready to drop the G on em’. In our planning and in these impromptu occasions we need the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

### 3) Declare Christ with relevance

- a. Missiologists call this Contextualization. It involves speaking the message of the gospel in a particular context. The kind of conversation I might have with someone at a bus stop in Medford Square is probably not the same conversation I would probably have on the campus at Tufts later in the week. While the message of the gospel never changes, the way we package what we say is always changing.
- b. Paul knew how to speak the language of the people. He was a master at establishing common ground, looking for connection points, and ways to bridge to the gospel from everyday life.
- c. Check **verses 22-23**. “To the unknown god.” Bridged the gap...
- d. What about v. 28? Paul spoke their language: Paul pulls from Greek poets at least twice in this short summary from Dr. Luke. We observe this twice in verse 28. Once when he quotes Epimenides of Crete who spoke of the divine as saying, “In him we live and move and have our being.” And again from Aratus who said, “For we are indeed his offspring.”
- e. Notice Paul’s tone here... He spoke with sensitivity... We don’t do this in a prideful, brash manner. This isn’t an attack of people... People are looking for authenticity. Dharti Lewis says that authenticity is the apologetic of our day. They want to see the real thing!
- f. We speak “the truth in love.”
- g. [??There was a time in college where if I smelled a Mormon (no offense to some of my friends or Governor Romney, but I could hardly wait to basically pick a spiritual and theological fight. Dude, would Jesus talk to them that way??]

### 4) Declare Christ and cover the essentials (Read vv. 24-31)

#### The Essentials

- a. **Proper view of God** (Creator, Sustainer, Provider, Sovereign Ruler, the Father of all people, and the Judge)
- b. **Proper view of man** (made in his image; rebels; in need of grace...)
- c. **Proper view of Christ** (perfect life, cruel death, glorious resurrection)

- d. **Proper view of our response.** (“he commands all people everywhere to repent.”) This is not a suggestion and you are not exempt.

**5) Declare Christ with urgency.**

- a. Verse 31: “because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed;” I can almost hear the Athenians bursting out into laughter: God, is going to judge me? Oh, God would never judge. He is love. “All you need is love, bro...” God is nothing but love, don’t you know that? And even if he were to enact some form of judgment it would never be through a man? And Paul anticipates their objection and says, “[you can be sure of this, because God has made it abundantly clear] “to all by raising him from the dead.”
- b. In light of the coming judgment, we can’t just pray for opportunities to share Christ, though that is certainly a wise move. Go make opportunities to share Christ. Listen the opportunities are there, we are responsible to capitalize on them.
- c. It has been said many times before, “God does not need our ability, but our availability.” Or a quote that impacted me in a major way when I was in about the eighth grade, “God doesn’t not call the qualified, he qualifies the called.” We are simply instruments in the hands of God for him to use us as he pleases.

**6) Declare Christ and make an appeal**

- a. Not only did Paul connect with them and speak the truth, but he also told them what they needed to do. He made an appeal for them to repent of their idolatry and sin and place their faith in Christ.
- b. This is the end goal in evangelism. Our hope and prayer for the people we share with is that they would believe like we have believed and experience the life that is found in Christ.

**7) Declare Christ and leave the results to God.**

- a. **Verse 32-34.** We see three responses: 1) Some mocked Paul and rejected the message. If you are really in this thing, bank on resistance and some form of persecution, and rejoice. Bill Hybels says to “embrace potential rejection, then actual rejection will be easier. Just own it. 2) Others wanted to hear more. Don’t be so surprised when the person you thought would mock you actually wants to hear more and consider what you are sharing with them. 3) The third response is belief. We find that an Athenian leader named Dionysius and a woman named Damaris repented and believed in Jesus and found peace with God.
- b. Listen, we cannot make anyone believe, and I’ll often point that out to people in a lighthearted way as an attempt to disarm them a bit...
- c. Have confident expectations that God will work through your witness and leave the results to him.
- d. Is it unrealistic for every person here to set a goal of bringing at least 1 person to church and share the gospel with at least one person by the end of the year? I hope that you would strive for much more than that, but that’s at least a great starting point right? One person with you to church. One gospel conversation with a friend by the end of the year.
- e. You say, “I can’t do that!” Well, then you are in the perfect place for God to use you...

What is stopping you from this? What are you afraid of? Fear cripples us.

**Believe.** The futility of our thinking. Believe that the gospel is powerful. **Believe** that God is at work. Believe.

**Pray.** for boldness and an effusion of the Holy Spirit (Who’s praying next Friday at 6:30pm?)

**Go!**

**Together.** Accountability (mission in Community; CGs!!) and **pray**

John Leonard Dober and David Nitchman answered the call to take the gospel to a people in desperate need. Will you? Will you go? Will you walk across the room? The class? Your neighborhood, so that people worship God and that the Lamb might receive the reward of his suffering? RHC is a church that is passionate to take the gospel across the street and around the world, because Jesus is worthy of not only our worship, but the worship of all people.

**Pray.**