

September 16th, 2018

1 - VIDEO: UNLEASHED

2 – TITLE SLIDE

WELCOME

Good Morning! Welcome to Fox Valley Christian Church!

NEIGHBOR SERIES

Next week we are starting a new series, it will be just 3 weeks long. During this series we are going to be looking at what it looks like to reach out neighbors and we are going to talk about practical ways that we can be reaching our neighbors.

REAL GOD SERIES

Then, on October 14th we are going to start an 8-week series called “The Real God”. This series is a Chip Engram series and it is based off of his book, “The Real God”. This summer I was able to read the book and it was phenomenal. It is a book that I will read and reflect on often.

This series will affect all aspects of our teaching ministries here at FVCC. During this series our Elementary aged kids will be using curriculum teaching the same concepts so that we can have deeper conversations at home.

Our Middle School and High School students will focus on this during their Wednesday night programming and their Sunday night small groups.

There is small group curriculum that several of our small groups will be using during this series. If you are not in a small group, or if you would like to find a small group that is using this curriculum during that time ... let me know. We will be putting a list out at our welcome center as it gets closer.

There is also material that we will be handing out for families to dig deeper at home.

During this series we will be looking at God and focusing on who He is and what that means for our lives.

INTRO

Today though, we will be finishing our sermon series “Unleashed” where we have been looking at God’s unleashed Spirit and His unleashed Church.

The last few weeks we have been looking at Paul. Since we have been looking at the book of Acts it is only natural we would end our series talking about Paul and his evangelism process.

Paul was one of greatest, if not the greatest, evangelist to have ever lived. And do you know what? Not every person that Paul evangelized to gave their life to God. Paul did have a 100% conversion rate. That shouldn’t surprise you, but I think sometimes we look at someone like Paul and we think that they

suffered, but always succeeded. That they were so captivating, so blessed by God, so empowered by the Spirit, that everyone that met them was transformed. That's not the case.

There is a lot that we can learn from Paul that translates to evangelism today.

Today we are going to look at one of the most well known sermons that Paul gave and we are going to look at what we can be learning from Paul.

ATHENS

When we pick up with Paul he is in Athens, alone, waiting for the rest of his friends.

ACTS 17:16-20

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¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.

We learn about both Athens and Paul here. Paul can't sit still. Paul is waiting for his friends and His Spirit is provoked as he sees this city so desperately in need of God.

Commentator R. Kent Hughes says this about Athens at this time:

“The population of Athens was about 10 thousand but there were 30 thousand statues of gods. The streets lined with idols of false deities, framed by the architectural magnificence of the Parthenon and the acropolis were dazzling to the eye.”

This was a spectacle, it was a site to see. Many would have been in awe of this and thought it was magnificent. Paul saw this and his spirit was provoked. This didn't sit well with him and it wasn't magnificent to him.

Paul saw this and he was called to action.

4 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

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.

5 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

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

6 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

¹⁹And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?"

7 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²⁰For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean."

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE IS OFFENSIVE

The first thing that Paul teaches us is that the gospel message is offensive to sinners. It is offensive to those that do not know Christ.

We see that there were two different types of philosophers that were talking with Paul. There were the Epicureans and the Stoics.

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Basically ... the Epicureans were the practical atheists of the day. They sought pleasure and they avoided pain. To them, that is what life pretty much boiled down to. The goal is to be happy and never sad.

The Stoics believed that God is in everything. It is almost like the force. They worship idols, because God is in everything. The tree, the stone, the moon, everything. Because of this anything can be worshipped.

Paul is about to share with them that everything they believe is wrong. This is offensive.

When we share the gospel, it is offensive to those that do not know God. It is offensive to people living in sin. It is offensive to people that are not saved.

We know this, but we need to admit it and understand it.

- You tell someone that they need to be saved – that the life they are living is not good – that's offensive.

- You tell someone that they are living in sin – that is offensive. That is why so many people are afraid to talk about Jesus anymore. We don't want to offend people.

You need to know ... the gospel is offensive to those that are not saved. It just is.

Paul knows this and he shares it anyway.

Paul know this and he knows how people respond when they are offended ... and Paul shares the gospel anyway.

Last week, we talked about Paul in Philippi. We know the result there. He was beaten, thrown in a dark prison, and chained. Paul could have lost his life and he knows it.

Paul wasn't alone in Philippi either. Paul was with his friends and Paul knew when he was in prison that he had supporters on the outside. He knew Luke was on the outside, he knew that Lydia was on the outside. He wasn't alone.

Now, in Athens ... Paul is alone. He is by himself, waiting for his friends, and still sharing the gospel. He knows it is offensive, he knows what the result of sharing might be, and he shares anyway. Why?

PAUL NEVER GOT OVER BEING SAVED

The simple answer is: Paul never got over being saved. Paul never got over being saved.

For some reason, the longer we are a Christian the easier it is to lose the passion. The easier it is to lose the zeal.

Think about this for a moment.

Imagine that you are on a cruise. You are with your spouse, having a great time. The two of you decide to go to the edge at night, have a romantic moment, and look out at the stars.

Something happens, you lose your footing, and you slip and fall overboard into the water. Your spouse goes crazy. They begin yelling for you and running and trying to get you help.

You are a pretty good swimmer, you had lessons growing up, but you really rather quickly that the water is cold and you can only tread for so long. The water is choppy and you don't think you are going to make it.

You stare up at your spouse who is frantic and begin to realize that you are going to die. This is going to be your last moment with them.

Then something incredible happens. Someone ... it's a passenger or a crew member ... you can't really tell. They just leap in the water. They have a life preserver for you. They swim up to you, grab you right before you slip under and they save you.

Later, you are laying in a hospital bed recovering and someone asks you what happened ... what do you say?

- Well ... all those years of swim practice when I was a little kid saved me
- My never say die spirit saved me

- It was no big deal, I got a little wet and then someone gave me a hand

NO ... you wouldn't say that. You would say, "I thought I was going to die. I knew that this was it for me and then he jumped in and he saved me."

Years would go by and you would continue telling people this story. Telling them about this man that jumped into the water and saved you when you were certainly dying. And you know what? You would share this story whether people believed you or not.

- I don't believe you fell in the water ... Well, it doesn't matter whether you believe me or not. I did and he saved me.

WHY IS IT THAT WE WILL SHARE A STORY ABOUT SOMEONE SAVING US FROM PHYSICAL DEATH, BUT WE SHY AWAY FROM SHARING THAT JESUS SAVES US FROM SPIRITUAL DAMNATION?

It's because the gospel is offensive and we don't want to offend people

It's because we have gotten over being saved. If we really believed that Jesus saved us from eternal death ... we would share it. If we really believed that others are going to suffer eternal death ... we would share it whether it was offensive or not.

I don't ever want to get over being saved. We need to know that the gospel message is offensive, but share it anyway.

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE IS ESSENTIAL FOR SALVATION

The gospel message is offensive ... but it is also essential.

ROMANS 10:17

9 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

¹⁷So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

Faith comes from hearing. Even if it is offensive, it is absolutely essential that people hear the gospel, that they hear the good news of Jesus.

So Paul shares the gospel:

ACTS 17:21-23

10 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²¹Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

11 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²²So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.

12 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

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.

I love how Paul shares the gospel. He does two things here.

First, he starts with where they are at.

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Paul has been looking at them. He has been watching them. He has been making notes. Paul starts with where they are. He starts with them. I notice you know about everything. I notice you are very smart. I also notice that there is this one thing that you don't know about. Well I do. I can make this unknown God known to you.

Paul starts with where they are at. Paul is not going to tell them to look up a Bible verse, he is not going to tell them about what Moses said or anything like that. Why? Because they don't know Moses.

Paul starts with where they are.

Next thing, Paul shares the gospel.

ACTS 17:24-26

14 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,

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²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

16 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²⁶And 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,

So Paul shares the gospel and he does so by starting with the past and focusing on God as Lord. God created everything, He has no need. We are all here because of God and His goodness and His greatness.

ACTS 17:27-28

17 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²⁷that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,

18 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²⁸for "'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.'

He then moves to the present and to our need for God. We are to seek Him.

I love this here too. Paul continues to meet them where they are, even when sharing the gospel. He uses their own poets to bring them to the truth of God and our need for Him.

Next Paul transitions from the present to the future. From our need for God to our response to God.

ACTS 17:29-32

19 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

²⁹Being 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.

20 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,

21 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

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."

22 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

³²Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this."

Paul doesn't sugar coat this. It is essential. Their lives are on the line. Paul tells them that their way of doing life is ignorant.

Their way of viewing God is ignorant. It is without knowledge. These are people that pride themselves on knowledge.

WALKING POINTS

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The result of this conversation, the result of this sermon is so telling and so beneficial for us to see.

Peter preaches the first ever sermon and thousands are added to the Church. We see this a couple times that thousands are added to the Church. Thousands are added to those that believe.

We see those numbers and think ... wow. That is what it looks like when God's Spirit is unleashed. That would never happen now.

Look at the result of Paul's message:

- some mocked
- some wanted to hear him again

ACTS 17:33-34

24 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

³³So Paul went out from their midst.

25 – SCRIPTURE SLIDE

³⁴But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

- Some believed and joined him

Not thousands, not hundreds, some ... and two were told by name.

One thing we need to leave here with today is a **LONG VIEW OF MINISTRY**

A long view of ministry. That is how Paul approached ministry. He didn't expect it to be easy. He didn't expect thousands to believe and then him just move on to the next. Paul would spend time with these people, he would build them up, he would come back to the cities to encourage and build up, he would write them letters and pray for them. Paul had a long view of ministry.

He recognized that success in ministry is sharing. He knew that success in ministry is not that thousands flock and follow. Success in ministry is sharing. Paul was in prison, beaten and abused ... and praising God. Why? Because it was a successful day. He was able to share the good news of Jesus.

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Paul shares the gospel, God changes lives. God transforms lives.

We share the gospel, that is success in ministry. We continue to nurture, build, up and invest in people ... but God does the saving. Knowing this, we take a long view of ministry. This is a lifelong journey. Some people we will just be a quick part of their long journey to knowing God. Others we will spend significant time with them on that long journey.

Either way, we do not live or die by one conversation, one moment. We recognize that it is just one moment in a long journey.

The next thing we can take with us today ... Since ministry is a journey, since ministry takes time ... **WHO ARE YOU INVESTING IN?**

Who are you investing in through your time and intentional witnessing? A couple weeks ago, I asked you who are you discipling? Today I am asking who are you sowing seeds into?

There is a difference between evangelism and discipleship. Discipleship happens after someone accepts Christ as their Lord and Savior. Evangelism is what leads people to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Who are you having intentional conversations with, who are you having spiritual conversations with, who are you making God known to? I don't expect you to save them in a conversation, because I don't expect YOU to save them. That is God's work.

But it is our job to share Christ and to make Him known.