

THE MESSENGER

Welcome to Market Street Methodist Church

MAY 2026

Finding God in the Public Square:

A Methodist Reflection on Acts 17:22-31

When Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus, he addressed a people hungry for meaning **yet unsure where to find it. “I see how extremely religious you are in every way,” he began—** a line that sounds less like flattery and more like a pastoral diagnosis. The Athenians had **altars everywhere, even one “to an unknown god.” They were seekers without a center, worshipers without a clear Word. Paul’s sermon becomes a masterclass in what John Wesley** would later call practical divinity: meeting people where they are, revealing the grace already stirring in their hearts, and pointing them toward the God who is nearer than they imagine.

Paul does not begin with condemnation. He begins with connection. Wesley would approve. Prevenient grace—the grace that goes before—means God is already at work in every human heart, in every culture, and in every searching question. Paul recognizes this divine ground-**work in Athens’ spiritual curiosity. He names their longing and then gently redirects it: the God they seek is not unknown at all. This God is the Creator who “gives to all mortals life and breath and all things,” the One in whom “we live and move and have our being.”**

For Wesleyans, this is the heartbeat of evangelism. We do not bring God to people; God is already there. Our task is to help others recognize the Presence that has been pursuing them **all along. Paul’s message affirms human dignity—“we too are his offspring”**—while also calling for transformation. Grace welcomes us as we are, but it never leaves us as we were.

Paul’s sermon also speaks with clarity about accountability. God “now commands all people everywhere to repent,” not as a threat but as an invitation to step into the life for which we were created. Wesley understood repentance not as shame but as awakening: the moment we turn from lesser gods toward the One who truly satisfies. And the assurance Paul offers is profoundly hopeful—**the risen Christ stands as God’s pledge that renewal, justice, and new creation** are already breaking in.

In a world filled with competing voices and spiritual confusion, Acts 17 reminds us that the gospel still belongs in the public square. Like Paul, we are called to speak with both courage and compassion, trusting that God is already at work in the hearts of our neighbors. Our task is to name the longing, proclaim the hope, and invite all people to discover the God who has never been far from any of us.

~ Pastor Ray



P & L Sunday School Class

Rabbi F. M. Isserman wrote a book entitled, *This is Judaism*. In this book, he tells of visiting the Cathedral of Notre Dame that is located in Montreal, Canada. This great Cathedral is a copy of the one in Paris, with its twin towers and a fly buttress holding up the sanctuary. Without question, it is a magnificent structure. As one reads of the Rabbi's visit, one is reminded that this is a Jew giving visit to a Catholic Church. The traditions of the Rabbi's faith are different, as is his attitude toward the use of images in worship. Rabbi Isserman writes of his first impressions.

He is awed by the beauty and enters with deep reverence. He is prepared to worship, but just inside the door, he sees a group of people kneeling before a statue of a saint. Suddenly, all of his feelings of reverence leave him. Only out of curiosity does he proceed down the aisle. As he mechanically moves forward, he sees a small boy—a crippled boy—his crutches on the floor beside him. Kneeling before the altar, his face uplifted to the cross that hangs above, the boy sets his eyes on that cross as the tears came streaming down his cheeks. The Rabbi knows what the boy is doing. He is here desperately seeking help. The young life has experienced great hardship and now he asks for God's strength. Tears come to the Rabbi's eyes. He kneels beside the boy. His heart aches and he's caught in the moment of compassion. He offers the only words which at that moment came to his mind. He softly speaks the word of Jacob. "Surely God is in this place...and I knew it not."

Part of the magnificence of our faith is bedded in the sudden discovery that God might be in places we least expect to find Him. Part of the greatness of God's power is expressed through his ability to open doors to those new places. We are looking for some of those places as we continue to examine the books of the Old Testament.

Why not join us Sunday—at 9 AM?

~Lane

We welcome you to
ADULT BIBLE STUDY

every **Monday** afternoon
at **2:00 p.m.** in the Social Hall

We hope you will come and join us!

MAY BIRTHDAYS

Sarah Wilson	May 7
Matt Mabalot	May 12
Len Cackowski	May 16
Beth Perry	May 16
Martha Kilmon	May 21
Buddy Carrow	May 26
Kirby Barrineau	May 30

*If your birthday is not being listed in our newsletter, *The Messenger*, please drop a note in the offering plate with your birthday listed! We **love** to recognize all of our church family on their special day!*

If needed, there are index cards on the back pew that you can write it on and drop it in the plate or give to Pastor Ray.

Happy Mother's Day!
May 10

NAME TAGS are located on the table in front of the Social Hall. Please remember to **RETURN YOUR TAG** after the service. Thank you!