

Yateley Baptist Church, Sunday 4 October 2020

Opening Prayer

Reading: Acts 17:16-34, ESV

¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the market-place every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Some 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. ¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

²² So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For 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. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶ And 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, ²⁷ that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way towards him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for

“‘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.’

Continues on next page →

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

³²Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." ³³So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Hymn: Praise! 894

Come, O fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing your grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise:
songs of God's abundant treasure,
sung by angel tongues above,
songs that tell the boundless measure
of my Lord's unchanging love!

2 I remember God's great mercy:
by his help I've safely come;
and I know he will not fail me,
but will surely bring me home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger
wandering far away from God,
and, to rescue me from danger,
shed for me his precious blood.

3 Through God's grace I am his debtor –
daily I this thought renew!
Let that grace, Lord, like a fetter
bind my wandering heart to you.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love!
Take my heart, O take and seal it,
seal it from your courts above!

Robert Robinson (1735-1790)

Prayer

Hymn: Praise! 748

In heavenly love abiding,
no change my heart shall fear:
and safe is such confiding,
for nothing changes here:
the storm may roar around me,
my heart may low be laid;
my Father's arms surround me,
how can I be afraid?

2 Wherever he may guide me
no want shall turn me back;
my Shepherd is beside me
and nothing can I lack:
his wisdom stands for ever,
his sight is never dim;
his love will leave me never
and I will walk with him.

Anna L Waring (1823-1910)

3 Green pastures are before me,
which yet I have not seen;
bright skies will shine with glory
where threatening clouds have been:
my hope I cannot measure,
my path to life is free;
my Saviour has my treasure
and he will walk with me.

Sermon: Evangelising the Ignorant

“Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.” (22)

1. Understand the World’s Idolatry

2. Point People to Creation

3. Explain Where Idolatry Leads

4. Expect a Mixed Response

Hymn: Praise! 754

Be still, my soul: the Lord is on your side;
bear patiently the weight of grief or pain;
leave to your God to order and provide;
through every change he faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul: your gracious, heavenly friend
through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

2 Be still, my soul: your God will undertake
to guide the future as he has the past.
Your hope, your confidence let nothing shake;
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul: the winds and waves still know
the voice of Christ that ruled them here below.

3 Be still, my soul: the day is hastening on
when we shall be for ever with the Lord,
when disappointment, grief and fear are gone,
sorrow forgotten, love’s pure joys restored.
Be still, my soul: when change and tears are
past,
in his safe presence we shall meet at last.

Catharina A D von Schengel (b. 1697), trans. Jane L Borthwick (1813-1897)

Closing Prayer