

“Christ-Centered And Culturally Relevant”

Acts 17

Sermon Series: “Who We Are”

Introductions: One of the most important, and frankly, one of the most divisive issues facing the church into United States in 2023 is the issue of how we are to relate to our culture. Here’s what I mean by culture. According to Leslie Newbigin, it is “the sum total ways of living developed by a group of human beings and handed down from generation to generation (give some examples of culture, maybe even differences between Washington and Tennessee)

-Here are the most common approaches:

1. Christianity against culture

(church as a bomb shelter, culture warriors, Christian Nationalism, NAR)

2. Christianity with culture

(Mirror, seeker movement, antinomianism, progressive Christianity, classic Protestant liberalism)

3. Christianity in and for culture

John 17:18- As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

Mission Statement-

To meet people where they are and help them become fully devoted followers of Christ

Core Value #1-

We are Christ-centered and culturally relevant.

Main Idea: The way to minister to an idolatrous culture is going to the idol worshippers where they are, engaging them in a culturally relevant way, and proclaiming Jesus to them.

1. The Motivation

The ultimate motivation is zeal for the glorious Name of God. This is why Paul’s spirit was provoked when he saw the city given over to idols.

2. The Methodology

A. Be intentional

B. Be insightful (see with spiritual eyes)

C. Be prepared

D. Be strategic

E. Be bold

F. Be tactful. (V. 22-23: Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, “Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; 23 for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you.”)

G. Be contextual

H. Be biblical (receive, redeem, reject)

-Explain these verses and apply to evangelism in the world and how we approach our worship services. Worship services are to exalt the Savior, edify the saints, and evangelize sinners. Worship is about the heart. Worship style is more about our mission.

3. The Message

The message is the gospel of Jesus.

(v. 2-4- Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, **3** explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, “This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.” **4** And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.).

Share the gospel from the Old Testament (Isaiah 53:6 and Psalm 16:10 for example)

With the Athenian philosophers, he pointed them to Jesus but the outline of his message was:

1. Creator-we are the creation. (“ God, who made the world and everything in it”)

2. Sovereign ruler-we are to be submissive. (“Since He is Lord of heaven and earth”)

3. Self-existent and self-sufficient-we are dependent. (“does not dwell in temples made with hands. Nor is He worshiped with men’s hands, as though He needed anything”)

4. A giver-we are to trust and worship because of what we graciously receive. (“since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings”)

5. Personal and knowable-we are to seek Him. (“so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring’”)

6. Righteous Judge-we are accountable. (“Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man’s devising. 30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, 31 because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.”)

He is contrasting the nature of the one true God with fake gods. He is pointing to Jesus, who rose from the dead, which presupposes the cross. Jesus is the Answer, but he presented him in a way that related to and engaged with the culture he was dealing with.