

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin R. Eden

The Sixth Sunday of Easter
Saturday, May 28, 2011 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, May 29, 2011 at 8:30 a.m. & 10:15 a.m.

“Make Known an Unknown God”

Acts 17:16-31

Christ is risen!! He is risen indeed!! Alleluia!!

In our text today, St. Paul stood up in the Areopagus in Athens, Greece, the place where philosophers would gather to talk. And Paul mentions that as he had been walking around looking at all of the gold, silver, and stone idols, he noticed that there was an altar with the inscription: “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.”

The people of Athens wanted to cover all of their bases just in case they had overlooked a god or goddess. They had their entire pantheon of gods, Zeus and all the others, but just in case those man-made idols weren't the answer, they wanted to appease this unknown god.

When listening to the way in which the world today speaks about God, it seems that at many times, we could put that same inscription on the altar of many churches: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. We need to be able to say more about God than just “God is love” or some other vague description without really knowing what that means.

Where does God become known to us? God is revealed through His Word and Sacraments. That is where we come to understand our Lord and Savior.

Not only do we need a deeper understanding of God and how He has forgiven and saved us, not only do we need a deeper understanding for our personal well-being, but as St. Peter says in our Epistle lesson, we need to “always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.” How do we become prepared to give an answer? By reading or hearing God’s Word on a regular basis; studying; brushing off the catechism and making sure that the height of your understanding, your theological zenith, did not happen while in junior high.

All of us have friends and family members who are outside of the kingdom of God. Think about one of them. What would you say to that person if he or she asked you to tell them about God? What would you say to that person if he or she asked you to tell them what the one central theme of the Bible? What is it that every verse from Genesis Chapter 1 through the end of Revelation focuses on and revolves around? Because there has to be one central unifying theme running throughout God’s dealings with all of His people. What is it?

Would you be able to say more than “God is love,” or “Jesus loves you and forgives those who believe in Him”? Both of which are very important statements, but are rather vague and relatively meaningless to someone who does not know who Jesus truly is.

The answer to the question that I posed concerning the one, unifying theme of Scripture is alluded to in Paul’s words in our first lesson. “The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man.”

If you remember from last week, in our Epistle lesson from 1 Peter, he clearly stated that Christ’s Church is never described in terms of brick and mortar. We are the “living stones” of which the Church is built.

The Bible, God’s Word, is the history of His interaction with His Church, His chosen people. God’s Church began in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were created in His own image: perfect and sinless. In Genesis chapters 1 and 2, there was no perceived need for Christ to enter the world and die for our sins.

But in Genesis Chapter 3, Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ruined that perfect relationship with God. Everything that follows is the history of God restoring His people to that original, righteous relationship that man and God once had.

In Genesis 3:15, Christ is promised for the first time. His

coming is foretold in numerous other passages throughout the Old Testament. And the people of God, from Adam and Eve, to Abraham, to Isaiah, and down through the history of God's people, God told His people that the Christ was coming for one reason: to restore you, the pinnacle of God's creation, to that original, righteous relationship that man and God once had.

How did Christ accomplish this? By suffering the punishment that we deserve for our sin and taking away our accountability for that sin. By doing away with the thing that ruined Adam and Eve's perfect relationship with God, and by placing His perfect righteousness on us, God now sees you in the same way that He once saw Adam and Eve: sinless and without guilt.

Creation is restored. We will not experience the fullness of this restoration until we experience the "new heaven and the new earth" that Jesus promises throughout the Gospels. However, our relationship with God has been healed by the wounds of Jesus Christ.

I encourage you to study God's Word; His creation, the Fall, and how creation has been restored. Creation is such an important part of our life of faith. It is the central theme of Scripture. Luther says that creation is one of the highest articles

of faith. He says that it is even more important than Christ being present in the bread and wine of Holy Communion. He actually said that.

If God did not create Adam and Eve to be sinless; if God merely guided the evolutionary process; then sin, death, disease, and every difficulty that is in your life would not be the result of our Fall into sin, but we could justifiably point our finger at God and say, "Look at what you put us through. This is Your fault for making us imperfect. It is Your fault that we get sick, that we get old, and that we die."

If a person throws out the article of faith that God created the heavens and the earth, they are not Christian. To say that creation did not occur as the book of Genesis tells us is to say that I am not accountable for my sins; I don't need forgiveness; God is the one to blame. He made me this way. Jesus came to fix God's imperfect beginning to life.

Why do you suppose that Satan and the world attack the teaching of creation with the vehemence that they do? Why do you suppose that Satan works so hard to mislead people into thinking that evolution is real?

Our feeble minds are incapable of understanding how God created everything out of nothing. However, it is easier to

understand God doing this rather than all of this appearing out of nothing by pure random chance.

With our rational thought, with our minds, with our intellect and our reason, God is unknown. It is only through child-like faith that we can approach the One, True God.

As Christ says in our Gospel lesson: The world cannot receive Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. For so many friends and loved ones, He is an Unknown God. Make Him known, so that they share your joy and proclaim "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.