

May 15, 2022

Paul in Athens

Acts 17:16-31

There use to be an old TV show called the Love Connection. You might be able to find re-runs on Game TV. The host Chuck Woolery use to say that they were trying to make a “love connection” between the contestants. This morning Paul is trying to make a God or Jesus connection with the people of Athens. He is trying to find something he has in common with them when it comes to religion.

The people of Athens worshipped many different Gods and they had many ways to express their faiths. Athens was a very cosmopolitan place. It was a trading center of the area. So many different people with many different faiths would pass through the city. This makes you think that Paul should have an easy time making connections with the locals. He just wants to share his experience with the Risen Jesus with them. The truth be told. Paul is having a very hard time witnessing to these people.

Luke tries to paint a pretty picture of the whole experience. Yet that is not the truth. Sometimes we have to read between the lines and look at what is not written in the story. The Athenians call Paul a babbler. Others use the term “spermologos”. Which kind of translates from the Greek to mean a chicken pecking the ground for small bits of food. This makes Paul a pecker of knowledge in their minds. Things are not going according to plan. Witnessing to the Athenians is much harder than Paul first thought. Luke would tell us that Paul would have to preach to a certain group three times. That is how much effort Paul would have to use to get his message across to them.

The greatest way to connect with people is on a human level. That is the first thing we all have in common. Then get to know your audience and share stories and experiences. What you will find is that we all have much more in common than you thought. This carries over into people’s spiritual and religious life. Most people believe in a God. Some may express it differently from us, but it is still an expression of their belief in God. I like to look at these as a great opportunity to learn and grow.

I think of all the people I have met and know from different religions. They have all taught me something. Either about God, myself or humanity. In the end I walked away knowing more about them and their understanding of God. Which in the end gives me a bigger understanding of God. This is also true just within the denominations of Christianity. Maybe being a pecker of knowledge can be a good thing if you learn from it.

At the end of the day we are all God's children. That is very important to remember. We were created by a God that loves and adores us and who wants the best for us. Not so that we just survive, but that we thrive. Some people's path to God maybe different from our own. That is okay. Those are opportunities to learn from them and hopefully grow. These opportunities may even strengthen our own expression of faith. Ask yourself, where do I see Jesus in this? The connections between people are always there. The key is how do we discover them.

The story of Paul in Athens reminds us that giving witness can sometimes be difficult. If not down- right impossible. There may be times to cut bait and move on. If it was that easy Jesus would not have died on the cross for us. Great things do come out of difficult and impossible situations. Have faith in God and hold on tightly. God bless and stay dry, Pastor D