

## Where Is God?

The Apostle Paul found himself in the important Greek city of Athens. He was deeply distressed to see how full of idols the city was.

He argued with those who were there including some philosophers. Paul tried to tell them about the good news of Jesus and the resurrection.

They brought him to a meeting place in Athens called Areopagus. It was a place where religion and morals were often discussed.

They thought what Paul was talking about was strange --- that is—Jesus and his resurrection.

As Paul talked to them, he said he noticed how extremely religious they seemed to be. He looked around at the objects of their worship in the city and he saw an altar with the inscription, TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.

Paul responded to it saying, what therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you, “The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, as though he needed anything since he himself gives to all mortals, life, breath and all things.”

He went on to say, “Indeed he is not far from each of us for in him we live and move and have our being.”

“For we too are his offspring.”

I think we would say our lives of faith would be easier if we could see more of God with our eyes and reach out and touch God.

And yet God has created us to live by faith. We would say God is present in the flowers and trees and birds of the air, but God is not the same as the flowers and trees and birds and as the late Professor Gerhart Frost wrote, “You can look at a tree and sometimes see God there, but sometimes all you see is a tree.”

And yet, we know that all of creation is a gift from God. And as we live in it, we can sometimes sense the closeness of God.

Page 2

I had the privilege this week of sitting outside on our deck to work on this sermon.

I could hear many different birds singing in the trees. What a gift it is to hear those sounds and to see those beautiful birds flying around and singing like a choir in the beautiful sunshine. And to think that every one of them were created by God.

In God we live and move and have our being. For example, Jesus left us the gift of Holy Communion through which we experience the presence of God.

In the Gospel Reading today from John, we see the promise Jesus made that when he ascended to God, he would send the Advocate the Holy Spirit to come and live among us.

It is in the form of the Spirit that God now lives in us and among us.

God is so close to us that we can't see God. As the prophet Isaiah said, "I am the Lord and there is no other."

As Paul saw among the people in Athens back then, at least they were searching for God. They knew that something else is needed to make sense out of life and to see how the world fits together.

How many people look at the stars without imagining a divine force behind it all?

The astronaut, Edgar Mitchell, was the 6<sup>th</sup> person to walk on the moon. He told what it was like on his space trip. The sight of the earth from afar, a blue and white jewel against a black velvet space, made tangible the presence of divinity and altered the course of his life.

He said, "I knew that life in the universe was not just an accident based on random processes."

In Romans 1:20, Paul said, "God has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.

In Athens, Paul mentioned something greater which is the resurrection. It is contrary to the way it seems the world works. In nature things die and decline.

Page 3

And each time that happens, things seem to be finished.

The resurrection is the assurance that our God who made us and all that there is can do anything and creates new life again and again.

So where is God today? That's a question we may be asking living with this pandemic today.

Think about it, how many times can we remember when the whole world was experiencing the same thing, some worse than others.

Some, like most of us, are able to financially etc. get along fine, and others who don't have the resources to feed themselves and their families.

Where is God for them? We are God for them.

They, like us, live and move and have their being in God. But besides that, we become God's servants for them as we reach out to our neighbors in any way we can.

By neighbor, God does not mean just those living next door to us. In God's view, our neighbor is every human being God has created.

It's important to realize that God doesn't cause things like this virus. That's not the God we believe in. God has created the world good but not perfect. There is freedom in creation like the freedom we are given because we are not robots. Things get out of control and bad things happen.

God feels our pain and God goes with us through all of life. God uses us through science and the medical profession to discover treatments for things like this.

In the meantime, we live everyday as a gift from our creator.

May God continue to bless you and comfort you as you live and move and have your being in this God who created you. Amen