

## **Uninspired!**

Acts 17<sup>22-31</sup>; [Psalm 66<sup>7-end</sup>; 1 Peter 3<sup>13-end</sup>] John 14<sup>15-21</sup>

*I see how extremely religious you are in every way.  
[Acts 17<sup>22</sup>]*

Is it heretical to suggest that the Apostle Paul got it wrong when he tried to preach in Athens?

- ✘ We learn, early in the chapter in Acts that, **Paul was waiting [for Silas and Timothy] in Athens** and that **he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols.**
- ✘ Because it was a centre of culture and learning, especially known for its philosophers, Acts records, **all the Athenians and the foreigners living there would spend their time in nothing but telling or hearing something new.**
- ✘ Paul just couldn't help himself - it is, in Acts, unique in that every other 'mission' that Paul undertook was at the direct prompting of the Holy Spirit.
- ✘ The reading for today ends two verses before the end of the chapter and the final verses say, **When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, "we will hear you again about this." At that point Paul left them. But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman name Damaris, and others with them.**

It is so heartening to note that, during this current crisis, one in four in the UK are watching some form of on-line Christian worship. But, it is also salutary to take notice that the average length of time spent in visiting an online act of worship is one minute (a bit like popping your head round the door of a Church to see what it is like). Encouraging

though the general picture is, it may be that we are as effective as Paul in Athens!

The great commission wasn't to go and convince people; it remains **go and make disciples of all nations** [Mt 28<sup>19</sup>].

Instead of complimenting people on being **religious** and then being clever in quoting their own poets at them (and even the Apostle Paul would probably struggle with Robbie Burns) in the hope that they can be persuaded to your opinion isn't going to work.

Making disciples is something that is inspired and takes shape by following Jesus advice in John:

- ✘ **Love** is the commandment and it is the only thing that can thaw the indifference of religion or any other philosophy. When people argue a case there has to be winners and losers, but when people are loved there are only winners. God's love for all humanity (and the world too) is clear - and when we help anyone to know that they are loved we have begun to help them understand something about God.
- ✘ It is also to channel **the Spirit of truth** (the word translated as **Advocate** 'ἄλλον παρακλητον' translated as **Comforted** in the AV is literally *the one called alongside* and that is what the Spirit is). It is much better for us all to know that we are never alone than it is to flatter whatever intellect they may have.

I confess that I have wasted a great deal of time arguing with people who *know* that they are right. While I defend their right to be wrong(!) it has been futile.

Because God is alongside me and you as both comforter and advocate, we can get on with loving people into God's kingdom and to do so at his prompting. In this, as in everything else in life, if God isn't in it, it isn't worth doing!