

WELCOME 23rd October 2022 – 20 Pentecost '22 C

Luke 9:28-35 & Acts 17:16-34

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! We're continuing our worship/teaching series Spiritual Intelligence as a family of disciples... **Bible Study Qs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m.

As we move into this week... **Co**exist. I don't know if you've seen that as a bumper sticker, poster or T-shirt? The thought behind it is that all of those worldviews – approaches to life, reality & faith are equally valid, equally conveying of truth, equally helpful & life-affirming... It was a turn-of-the-21st-century effort to foster tolerance & mutual understanding. **Why** can't we all just get along?

The problem is obvious... While that's a nice salespitch slogan or sentiment... each of those worldviews - approaches to life, reality & faith are mutually exclusive: You can't hold one as valid & true **AND** the others equally at the same time. So how do we decide, discern, judge that which is true, gives life, gives purpose & meaning hope & promise? In a world **of** pluralism...

"This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to Him."

"For he (God) has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead."

God doesn't offer us a sop he gives us his Son. We aren't offered a slogan; we are shown the Saviour. It's not one religion among many, but a relationship that endures & leads to life that never ends & a fullness that truly makes our lives complete.

We never apologize, explain away, or tap dance around the gift of grace that comes in Christ alone & delivers us from sin death evil & punishment for our rebellion.

We do is celebrate & share that assurance in joy & love.

We'll explore & experience that together today... Jesus in a World of ^{fake} Pluralism

Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, You are God, Your word is truth, and You have promised good to Your servants...to all who turn to you for strength refuge & salvation. Make us willing & obedient so that your blessings flow through us unhindered as blessings to the world. Speak so we hear. Open our hearts so we understand. Move in our lives so that we reveal your power in us to those around us & your grace claims this city as your own. Let it be in us according to your word...In Jesus' Name... Amen.

Let's hear God's word...

FAITH CHAT: We'll play a game of...*How do you respond?*

1. Someone says to you, "There are many ways to God."
2. Someone says to you, "How can you be sure you really know God?"

Spiritual Intelligence is **not** how much you know: SI is learning to discern right/wrong, good/evil, beautiful & true/horrendous & false...It's wisdom leading you to what is life-giving & God-honouring. It's walking the path of abundant life & impact in Jesus' Name. Spiritual Intelligence is celebrating & participating together in the transforming glory of God. Spiritual Intelligence is **you** maturing in likeness to Jesus Christ.

20 PENTECOST '22 C – SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE: JESUS IN A WORLD OF FAKE PLURALISM

Researchers say there **are** +/- 4200 religions in the world. 4200 belief systems or spiritual paths w/ at least some followers. 4200 options in pursuing something higher bigger deeper than life as we experience it daily. 4200 alternatives some say hold the truth & whose paths all supposedly lead to the same destination. It's not new. The Bible tells us as much.

Moses grew up *in* & led Israel *from* a panorama of Egyptian gods. Joshua led God's people into the Promised Land of Canaan whose inhabitants were steeped in fertility religions. Elijah defeated the Baal worshippers on Mt. Carmel & Paul confronted the idolatry in Athens. From 1st page to last the Bible & human history show cultures ancient & modern maintain a god smorgasbord. Again no surprise.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky wrote; **So** long as man remains free he strives for nothing so incessantly & so painfully as to find someone to worship. John Calvin was equally incisive: "**the** human heart is a perpetual idol factory" as was Martin Luther: "**There** has never been a people so wicked that they did not establish & maintain some sort of worship. Everyone has set up a god of their own to which they look for blessings, help & comfort." The human condition is driven by seeking to connect our lives w/ "more" – something greater grander more majestic satisfying fulfilling than ourselves. We long to embed our lives in the good beautiful & true...blessing help & comfort...real fundamental essence of existence...origin & goal of life. Our very being is hardwired to make that connection real & lasting.

So there's this deep yearning that has to be filled...but **WE** want the option of choice. **WE** want to determine/dictate **BOTH** the outcome (our satisfaction/wholeness) **AND** the path (whatever is easiest). We like to be in control & we don't like to be told what to do. So often our gods our beliefs our *spiritual but not religious* paths become a minestrone soup...bits of everything thrown together adjusting to taste over time. **AND...**

That's Paul in Athens...you @ footy training or the work lunch table....me @ a café or service club....us at family gatherings/pub...up to our armpits in a "soup" of belief & religious practice...from the devout atheist claiming "no God" to the skeptic too apathetic to care to the *spiritual-but-not-religious* fence-sitter to the generationally faithful follower of Jesus or other faith just trying to make sense of it all. Maybe you like Paul like me feel...**While** Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city. May be better to say he was heartsick when he saw all those Athenians aimlessly devoted to one thing & then another... aimed at everything/anything hoping to find something – "When people stop believing in God they don't believe in nothing they believe anything." *paroxuneto/spasm in his soul*

Last wk I mentioned pop-star Halsey "deep sadness inside me that no amount of worldly pleasure can touch, a loneliness, an emptiness...I wonder often if I chose the wrong life for myself... & the weight of it is suffocating". Just the thought of a 28 yr old possessing much but enjoying little hurts me...Paul was heartsick when he saw Athenians debating discussing arguing worshipping dog's bkfst of gods ending up no better than they started. As lost at sundown as at sunrise. But rather than abandon all hope back away & say nothing leave them to their own devices Paul does 2 things & teaches us **how**:

1. We never apologize, explain away, or tap dance around the gift of grace that comes in Christ alone & delivers us from sin death evil & punishment for our rebellion.

Paul's witness is one we can understand & imitate. There is a God who you're looking for in all the wrong places who created all that is & delights in satisfying your every need. He doesn't want anything from you. You don't have to **DO** something awesome for God to find you awesome. He **ALREADY** loves you deeply passionately from forever & wants nothing other than your life to flourish in his presence. Henry...You catching this? He wants you to know him as intimately as he knows you & wants no barrier to exist b/t you & the fullness of life he intends for you.

But we are accountable for sin...choosing to be god for ourselves - offering our lives to gods that will not bring us to completeness wholeness contentment. We are accountable for lives & ways of living that are in direct opposition to God reveals in his word as true right & holy. We are accountable for our lives & are invited to turn away from self-centred seeking to God-centred living (repent). To persist standing opposed to what God offers freely is to live die & spend eternity apart from the highest joy & the deepest love...is to miss out on the satisfying peace & completeness & the presence & power that brings all things *home to God*. 1 Pt 3:18

For he (God) has set a day for judging the world with justice by the man he has appointed, and he proved to everyone who this is by raising him from the dead."

God will make all things right good precisely as they're intended...To do so God gives us his Son. We aren't offered a slogan/slap in the face; we're shown the Saviour. Not one religion among 4200, but a relationship that endures & leads to life that never ends & fullness that truly makes our lives complete...lifts the weight of our burdens & heals our soul-deep brokenness. Many of those around Paul were pretty sure he'd lost his mind...too much time in the sun w/o a hat. Here it was just mockery, but for Jesus he was beaten, jailed, stoned w/ actual stones, run out of town by mobs...killed. Tougher than being unfriended on FB, cast off of Twitter - losing out on a plum job But he doesn't back down, make excuses, or back away from the gift of grace that comes in Christ alone crucified/risen/ruling & delivers us from sin death evil & punishment for our rebellion.

"This is my Son, my Chosen One. **Listen to Him.**" The Father points to the Son as the ultimate voice – the final hope of the universe – the One for whom we are hardwired for relationship. Jesus said of himself *"I am the way, truth & life...no one comes to the Father except through me"* bringing an end to score-keeping & law-abiding as some measure of being "good enough" because none are & never could be...**AND** that the weight of the universe sits on Jesus' shoulders nailed to the cross...Outside of him, distant from him, to stand against him...is loss, sorrow & death...deep sadness loneliness emptiness fruitless searching grasping & grappling... **This** is a trustworthy saying, & everyone should accept it: *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"& I am the worst of them all. But God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him & receive eternal life.* – 1 Tim 1:15-17 **THAT** is good news.

2. We celebrate & share that assurance in joy & love. NB Paul stands surrounded by many who don't buy a word he's saying but rather than rage & rail against their pagan faith...he invites them into true faith...authentic hope...real love...genuine peace & indisputable joy...*"Come join me"* in life w/o end & purpose & meaning bigger than anything this world can offer. He points to Jesus crucified, risen ruling as the origin & goal of life...as the One who makes all things right good beautiful true... who restores what we lose to sin & death & defeats the powers that steal & destroy. **"Because** God's children are human beings—made of flesh & blood—the Son also became flesh & blood. For only as a human being could he die, & only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of death." – Heb 2:14-15

We never back down, make excuses, or tap dance around the gift of grace that comes in Christ alone crucified/risen/ruling & delivers us from sin death evil & punishment for our rebellion. We simply celebrate & share that assurance in joy & love. Lesslie Newbigin was a Scottish missionary theologian author teacher...*The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society*, 1989, he writes: **How** is it possible for the gospel to be credible, that people should come to believe that the power which has the last word in human affairs is represented by a man hanging on a cross? The only answer, the only way to make the Gospel understood, is a congregation of men & women who believe it & live by it.

Here's what's cool...That's Paul in Athens....you @ footy training or the work lunch table....me @ a café or service club....us at family gatherings/pub...up to our armpits in a "soup" of belief & religious practice...living the reality of Jesus love & life & his relationship to the Father here now in the midst of many who think we're nuts, but celebrating & sharing that assurance in joy & love...inviting others into life w/o end & purpose & meaning bigger than anything this world can offer.

TAKE IT HOME – The disciples were falling asleep on the job and that is a danger we face too.

Where this week, will you celebrate & share your assurance in Jesus?

With whom will you share it?

Let's pray... Father, I pray to you in the name & by the authority of your Son, Jesus. Bless us as your people, sent into your world with a word of resurrection hope & eternal joy. Use us to bless others to your glory in ways we never dreamed possible. Lord Jesus Christ, you are the one who will judge the world with justice by granting all who believe in you your righteousness. You are the One who defeated death forgave our sin & crushed evil & our rebellion by your cross & resurrection. Strengthen our trust & lead us to rest & peace in you alone. Teach us by your Holy Spirit, what is true, what to do, & who you want us to reach with your word in our daily living. We ask all this & whatever you know we need but would never ask...for your name's sake. Amen