

# Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2017

## Easter 6

White



Altar to the unknown  
God in Pergamum

### Collect

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

**Acts 17:22-31** English Standard Version (ESV)

### Paul Addresses the Areopagus

17<sup>22</sup> So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious.<sup>23</sup> For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.<sup>24</sup> The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,<sup>[a]</sup><sup>25</sup> nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.<sup>26</sup> And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place,<sup>27</sup> that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us,<sup>28</sup> for “‘In him we live and move and have our being’;<sup>[b]</sup> as even some of your own poets have said, “‘For we are indeed his offspring.’<sup>[c]</sup><sup>29</sup> Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man.<sup>30</sup> The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent,<sup>31</sup> because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

**Footnotes:** a. Greek *made by hands*. b. Probably from Epimenides of Crete. c. From Aratus’s poem “Phainomena”.

**COMMENT:** Paul's only recorded attempt to convert pagan philosophers in Athens was not particularly successful. In true Greek rhetorical style he argued from the known, idols along the city streets, to the unknown, the God who is the creator of all and now revealed in Jesus Christ. It was the resurrection that so puzzled his audience. As a centre of learning with a great university to which contemporary intellectuals flocked, Athens delighted in philosophical debate in a purely academic spirit. It was the resurrection which so puzzled this audience. How little the world has changed in 2,000 years! The apostle's address showed an impressive knowledge of Greek philosophers, especially the Stoics. Born in the Greek seaport city of Tarsus (now in southern Turkey), an important centre for Stoic philosophers, Paul would have been as thoroughly familiar with Hellenistic culture as with his own Jewish heritage.

**John 14:15-21** English Standard Version (ESV)

### **Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit**

14 <sup>15</sup> “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper,<sup>[a]</sup> to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be<sup>[b]</sup> in you. <sup>18</sup> “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

**Footnotes:** a. Or *Advocate*, or *Counselor*; also 14:26; 15:26; 16:7. b. Some manuscripts *and is*.

**COMMENT:** This further selection from what scholars call John's "Departure Discourse" quotes Jesus preparing the disciples for the future when he would no longer be with them. Sentiment, if nothing else, demands that we regard these as Jesus' own words; but they have been filtered through the prism of John's mind and the six decade old tradition of the apostolic church. The clue to this is the Greek word *parakletos*, translated variously as "Advocate," "Counselor," and "Comforter." It appears here, in verse 26, in 16:7, and again only in 1 John 2:1. The word describes the role of the Holy Spirit (verse 17). The point being made, of course, was that instead of having Jesus' physical presence to guide their discipleship, they would always have the Spirit as his personal indwelling presence. The Spirit's function was identical with that of Jesus himself. The end of verse 19 refers to the Resurrection. It rings triumphantly across the gravesite of every believer giving hope in the deepest shadows of death. Love and obedience to his commandments will be the means by which all his followers will know his continuing presence.

**Psalm 66** *Jubilare Deo* Grail Psalter

**☩ Cry out with joy to God, all the earth.**

<sup>1</sup> Cry out with joy to God all the earth,

<sup>2</sup> O sing to the glory of his name.

O render him glorious praise.

<sup>3</sup> Say to God: "How tremendous your deeds! ☩

Because of the greatness of your strength  
your enemies cringe before you.

<sup>4</sup> Before you all the earth shall bow;  
shall sing to you, sing to your name!" ☩

<sup>5</sup> Come and see the works of God,  
tremendous his deeds among men.

<sup>6</sup> He turned the sea into dry land,  
they passed through the river dry-shod. ☩

Let our joy then be in him;

<sup>7</sup> he rules for ever by his might.

His eyes keep watch over the nations:  
let rebels not rise against him. ☩

<sup>8</sup> O peoples, bless our God,  
let the voice of his praise resound,

<sup>9</sup> of the God who gave life to our souls  
and kept our feet from stumbling. ☩

<sup>10</sup> For you, O God, have tested us,  
you have tried us as silver is tried:

<sup>11</sup> you led us, God, into the snare;  
you laid a heavy burden on our backs. ☩

<sup>12</sup> You let men ride over our heads;  
we went through fire and through water  
but then you brought us relief. ☩

<sup>13</sup> Burnt offering I bring to your house;  
to you I will pay my vows,

<sup>14</sup> the vows which my lips have uttered,  
which my mouth spoke in my distress. ☩

<sup>15</sup> I will offer burnt offerings of fatlings  
with the smoke of burning rams.

I will offer bullocks and goats. ☩

<sup>16</sup> Come and hear, all who fear God.

I will tell what he did for my soul:

<sup>17</sup> to him I cried aloud,  
with high praise ready on my tongue. ☩

<sup>18</sup> If there had been evil in my heart,  
the Lord would not have listened.

<sup>19</sup> But truly God has listened;  
he has heeded the voice of my prayer.

**℟ Cry out with joy to God, all the earth.**

<sup>20</sup> Blessed be God who did not reject my prayer  
nor withhold his love from me. **℟**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** This was part of a thanksgiving liturgy for a person of some wealth and public stature presenting substantial offerings in the temple. The impressive quantity of the sacrifices (verse 15) may have resulted in the psalm being preserved. The psalmist offered his praise not only for what God had done for him, but as an example of God's saving help for all mankind. God's purposeful actions and special providence for Israel had an important place in the psalm, especially in the first part of this psalm. After citing the Exodus as one instance for rejoicing (verse 6), the psalmist recalled the Exile and the return from Babylon (verse 8-12) as further evidence of God's gracious acts which called forth praise from God's people. The scene then shifted to the temple where the psalmist intended to make substantial votive offerings (verses 13-15). He summoned all who revered God to witness to God's goodness with him (verse 16), then stated his own worthiness because God had listened to his prayer and his praise (verses 17-18). An appropriate doxology ended the psalm.

### **Short Preface**

But chiefly are we bound to praise you because you raised him gloriously from the dead. For he is the true paschal lamb who was offered for us, and has taken away the sin of the world. By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again he has restored to us everlasting life.

### **Post Communion**

God our Father, whose Son Jesus Christ gives the water of eternal life: may we thirst for you, the spring of life and source of goodness, through him who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

### **Blessing**

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**