A photograph of a church interior, showing rows of wooden pews facing a sanctuary with a large, colorful stained glass window. The ceiling is made of exposed wooden beams. The text "JUNE 3, 2020" is overlaid at the top center.

JUNE 3, 2020

AGAPE FROM AFAR

Adjusting to life amidst Coronavirus

A WORD
FROM
PASTOR
JILL

As a way to remain connected during this time apart, I will be putting together a weekly newsletter with a reflection based on the upcoming Sunday scripture passage. I hope that by taking a few moments to reflect on the Word of God and pray, we can feel grounded and connected to God and to one another during this uncertain time. -*Pastor Jill*

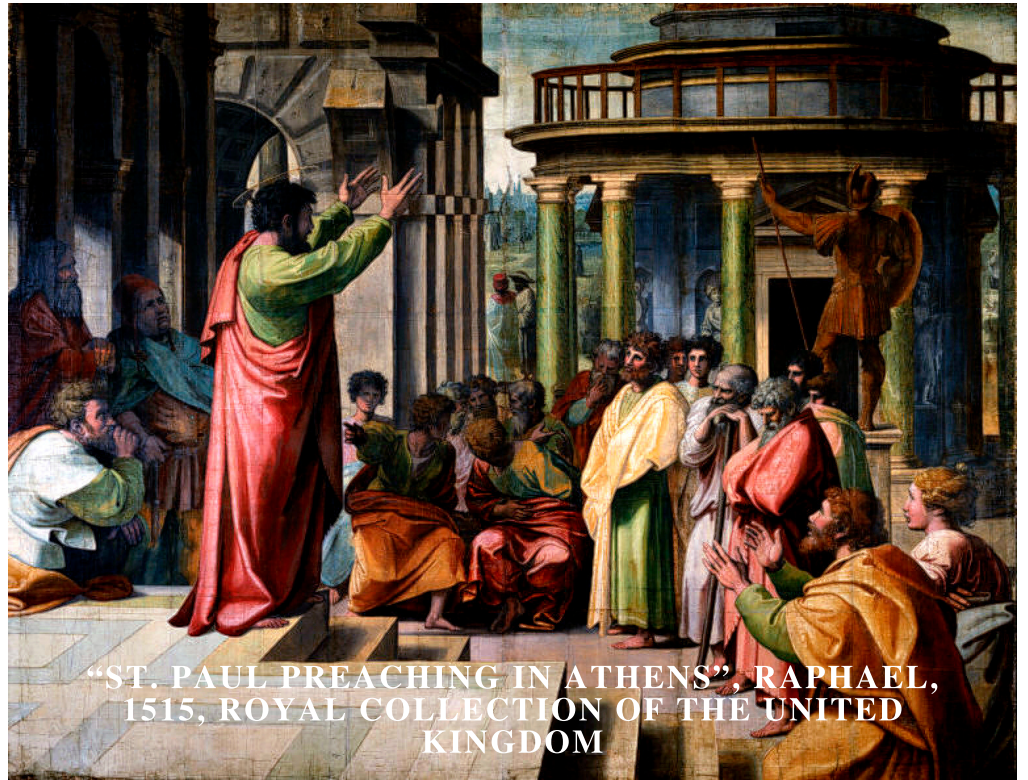


The scripture for this week is Acts 17:22-31. In this passage the Apostle Paul is preaching in Athens to a group of non-believers. He tells the crowd the "unknown god" they worship, is in fact the God who created the universe and raised Jesus from the dead. As Christians we know this God, but at times we forget to live our lives in ways that honor the God who indeed "is not far from us" (Acts 17:28).

Take some time to reflect on Acts 17:22-31 on the following pages.

Read the passage:

Acts 17:22-31



Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, ‘Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, “To an unknown god.” 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, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we too are his offspring.” Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’



Reflect:

1. In this passage Paul says, "The God who made the world and everything in it does not live in shrines made by human hands." Has worshipping at home instead of inside a church building during this time changed how you think about God?
2. Acts 17:28 says, "In him (God) we live and move and have our being." How does this realization impact your life and how you interact with others?
3. What is this passage calling you to do today? This week?

Pray:

Creator God, in you we live and move and have our being. So, take our gifts and help us to use them to serve the most vulnerable. We pray that we may do our part to create a just world for all. Amen.



It has been a difficult week following the protests related to George Floyd's death especially as we are still in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. It is hard to know how to respond. As Christians we must ask ourselves "What is God calling me to do in this moment?"

The following is a part of the response offered by the Ministerial Leadership Team of the Illinois Conference of the UCC:

To echo the sentiments of the Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III; As people of faith we are called to pray, but more than prayer is needed. Yes, speak out, but more than just conversation is needed. People of faith are called upon to act in ways that will rebuild, reform and reunite this land. In the days that lie ahead we ask you to ask these questions based on Micah 6:8: What does the Lord require of you? But to do justly, To love mercy, And to walk humbly with your God ? "God's desires for us are not shrouded in mystery. God has made it crystal clear how we can please our Creator; the way we should act, what we should value, and how we should relate to the Holy. It's not a question of knowledge but a matter of will." (New King James Commentary, Henry Blackabee)

What are you willing to give to effect change in this moment in history? What can you give to bring "God's Kin-dom on earth"?

What I have been
reading:

*Raising White Kids:
Bringing Up Children in a
Racially Unjust
America* by Jennifer
Harvey

What I have been
watching:

The Kindness Diaries on
Netflix

What I have been
listening to:

There was Jesus - Zach
Williams & Dolly Parton

**Please reach out to
a staff member if
you need financial,
emotional or
spiritual assistance.
As always, we are
here to help!**

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