

## 1. Introduction

- a. Japan story
- b. Is this fascinating culture or is it something more?
- c. The Bible talks about idolatry - worshipping idols. Is this what it means?
- d. We don't live in Japan so what does this mean for us?
- e. GLOCAL - Global Church Local Influence
  - i. Dive deeper into what we think as a church is our global responsibility
  - ii. What we do here in Cape May as well as around the world

## 2. Acts 17:16-34

- a. 17:16 → Mission of the church boils down to idol worship vs. God worship
  - i. Idols are anything that you worship besides the one true God
    1. From statues to yourself to an inaccurate version of God
  - ii. When people cling to idols, they sacrifice the grace that God has for them
    1. Psalm 135:15-18, those who trust in idols become like them (dead)
  - iii. **The Gospel is about turning from worshipping idols to worshipping the one true God instead**
    1. this is the message and call to the whole world
- b. 17:17-18 → The message is the same, but the method of spreading it changes
  - i. In Acts 17:2 Paul reasoned w/ them from the scriptures
  - ii. Here and following, he reasons w/ them from logic and philosophy
  - iii. Why? It was the culture in that city
    1. Epicurean Philosophers: pleasure is the chief end of man
    2. Stoic Philosophers: moral wisdom, judgment is chief pursuit
  - iv. You can't talk about the Gospel with every person exactly the same way
  - v. Paul spoke in people's heart language
  - vi. We call this being *incarnational* - It's what Jesus did for us, took on flesh
  - vii. Otherwise you run the risk of bringing your culture and not the Gospel
  - viii. **We are commanded by Jesus to be incarnational**
- c. 17:19-21 → Because he is being wise in his presentation, people are curious
  - i. v21 - sound familiar?
  - ii. Not everyone is going to want to hear the Gospel b/c it is offensive
  - iii. But you need to communicate as clearly as you can - contextually
    1. Different audiences = different communication
    2. c.f. Commercials on weather channel vs. super bowl
  - iv. Know your audience - know what makes them tick
  - v. If you go to Central China as a missionary, you need to speak Chinese
    1. For us too
- d. 17:22-23 → Paul primes the pump w/ his words ("very religious")
  - i. Not using flattery (doesn't care if they like him)
    1. being wise and cunning IN ORDER to PREACH the GOSPEL.
  - ii. Contextual doesn't mean being a chameleon
  - iii. Contextual is not compromise!

1. Paul said no blood was on his hands b/c he preached the Gospel w/ all his heart and the power of God (can any of us say that?)
- iv. Some people say churches like Revolve are compromising b/c we don't look like a church from 1955.
  1. It's not compromise. It's intentional to communicate to a new world.
- v. Paul is contextually presenting the idol breaking Gospel of Jesus
- vi. Be contextual, not a chameleon**
- e. 17:24-28 → read each verse and explain/clarify
  - i. He brings in a biblical thought and he wraps it up by quoting two secular sources not from the Bible
    1. Ex: "I can't get no satisfaction, but I try..."
    2. Ex: "I still haven't found what I'm looking for..."
  - ii. He is building a bridge of communication rather than blowing one up
    1. Where in your life do you build a bridge vs. blow one up?
  - iii. Some people are chameleons, and some people just walk around with a bazooka looking for a fight.
    1. Brother Steven White
  - iv. The way we communicate builds or destroys a bridge to share the Gospel**
- f. 17:29-31 → Having built that communicative bridge, Paul goes in for the knockout
  - i. Like I said, he isn't there to make people feel good. He has an agenda.
  - ii. All mankind is born worshipping idols
    1. Idol factory → worship the created rather than the creator
    2. You do it too
  - iii. God overlooked this and stored up wrath as the punishment for idol worship, but then he poured it out on Jesus
  - iv. Now, God calls all mankind to repent (to turn from idols, to God)
    1. Because Jesus died, we can turn to God.
    2. Because Jesus is the ONLY way to God - every other way is an idol
  - v. Why is this important? B/c it's serious business - one day God is appointing Jesus to judge
    1. Those who are surrendered and follow Jesus are given an underserved pardon
    2. Those who don't - let their idols save them because God won't
  - vi. Paul doesn't pull any punches. He communicates truth.
    1. We don't have to compromise the message of God
    - 2. People need Jesus - no need to apologize for it**
- g. 17:32-34 → Paul never got to finish. Never planted a church. A few people believed
  - i. You can't control the results. You can only determine whether you will be obedient.

- ii. You can't save someone. The Bible says that God chooses people, calls them, saves them, forgives them, perfects them over time, guarantees their future, and on and on. HE does it. Not you. You have no power.
  - 1. Can't save yourself. Can't save others. You are a conduit for God to work through.
- iii. All followers of Jesus are called to live a life of mission - the mission is to bring people from worshipping idols to worshipping Jesus
- iv. You can be the most contextualized, incarnational person on the planet, but you can't save someone.
- v. It's up to you to **choose obedience** and to do everything you do to the best of your ability, but you can't save someone

### 3. Conclusion

- a. Bottom Line: The mission of the church (and your mission as a follower of Jesus) is to lead all people from worshipping idols to worshipping the one true God
  - i. All people (incarnational ministry)
  - ii. One way to heaven and everything else is just an idol
- b. As a church this means:
  - i. Not looking to bring culture, the West, or our brand
  - ii. Looking to bring Jesus - turn people from idols
  - iii. Speak to people in their own heart language
- c. For you it means action:
  - i. **Don't be a chameleon**
    - 1. Be in the world, but don't be like the world
    - 2. If you are blending in too much than you are worshipping an idol
      - a. *You become like whatever it is that you worship*
  - ii. **Don't blow up bridges for the sake of blowing up bridges**
    - 1. The church isn't a bomb shelter - it's like a medic on the battlefield
    - 2. Invade your world w/ the idol breaking Gospel of Jesus Christ
    - 3. Surrender yourself to Christ - where he's placed you
      - a. Unless it's an environment that is simply too dangerous for you to stay in
  - iii. **Turn from your idols and surrender/worship Jesus**
    - 1. What gives you the most joy, stability, security, hope, pleasure?
    - 2. That's what you're trusting in to save you from your sins.
      - a. Is it reliable? Is it faithful? Is it guaranteed? Is it safe? Will you risk your life on it? Have you given it thought?
    - 3. Jesus calls you to turn from your idol and turn to the Father
    - 4. Will you respond to his call or will you trust in your idol?
      - a. Will your idol be there for you?
    - 5. A decision, but also a constant process of turning to God
  - iv. My sister in law calls this process Jesus creeping...
- d. I don't care what you call it, but drive something into your brain
  - i. You need to be incarnational

ii. Your mission is to turn people from idolatry