



Sermon – March 03/26/2023
Dr. Phillip Bethancourt

Verses Covered This Week
Acts 17:16 - 34

And let's open our Bibles together to Acts 17 this morning. Acts 17 this morning. Weren't y'all blessed by the worship team today as they led us in worship? Absolutely. Hey, and as you're turning to Acts 17, there's some exciting things going on in the life of the church that I want to make sure you're aware of. First of all, if you're a guest in the room, welcome home. You walked in on a great Sunday. Because out in the lobby right after this in the foyer, following the service, we've got a Missions Fair going on. We want you to find all sorts of different ways you can get connected both in our community and around the world with what God is doing in and through Central. I also noticed there's some popcorn out there at the Mary Branch table. I saw, I heard rumors of donuts. There's candy for the kids. But there's some amazing information you can find about all the different practical ways we're meeting physical and spiritual needs right here in the Brazos Valley and around the globe. Uh some of the things that you'll find there are details about some of the missionaries that we've sent out from our church. Learn more about them. Or some of our upcoming mission trip opportunities to El Salvador or Honduras, back to Roatan, or to Ireland that are coming up this summer. Or for our students in our high school ministry heading up to Colorado for that mission trip. I want to challenge you on your way to your life groups, just make a pass by there and find a connection. Because our heart is to see you tied into what God is doing through the life of our church. And as we move towards Easter, I also want to keep in front of you that a couple of Fridays from now on April 7th, we're going to be doing our first Good Friday service at 6:00 PM on that Friday night, the 7th. We want to invite you to join us here at Central to just fix our hearts on the cross as we move into this Easter season and to step into that space with us for the very first time.

Now, you know over the last few weeks, we've been lifting up prayer cards. And you'll see more available in the seat backs in front of you. And I want to challenge you to keep filling those out with new requests or answered prayers. But today, at the conclusion of our message, during the response time, I'm just going to invite you to come and join me here at the steps and let's pray for these people we've written these cards down over. There's not something magical that happens when you walk an aisle and stand in front of the congregation, kneel down to pray. But here's what I know that if we're not willing to take a step to pray, are we going to be truly willing to

take a step to share? And maybe this is something the Lord can do to spark your heart for the people that you've been praying for. And I've just seen some incredible prayer requests come in and some answered prayers. We had another fun one. I told you about the praying against the hamster last week. This week, one of our, I think middle school or high school girls, prayed that there'd be more cute boys that come to Central. So, we'll see how that works out. There was a young child who prayed that God would help change his heart and get forgiveness from his parents because him and his siblings fight all the time. And they know how much challenge that puts their parents through and it was encouraging to see that. There were also many of you that prayed for different people in your life. There was probably almost a half dozen of you who mentioned that you have someone close to you in your life who's made a decision to live an LGBT lifestyle and walk away from Jesus with their life. And you're praying for God to rescue them and bring them back. There was another person that shared about how they've had two Gospel conversations recently. One with a person who's from a Hindu background and praying that God would open their eyes to see their need of Jesus. There's a heart for the mission field right here in our church. And that's why it's so fitting we come to Acts 17. Because last week in Romans 10, we talked about the mission. And this morning, we're going to think about the mission field. Who God has called us to reach and how He has called us to share. You know, as we look around America and see this secularizing culture all around us, it feels increasingly hostile to the things of God. The challenge is we can feel as if we're alone. That there's never been a time in Christian history where people have encountered a cultural moment just like this where people are turning from God. Maybe they're spiritual but not religious. They're atheists. Or maybe they're seeking their own gods through success and satisfaction and significance. And we look around the landscape and we wonder, can any other time in Christian history relate? And what we're going to find this morning in Acts 17 is that the answer is, yes. That the days we live in today with hostility to the things of Jesus is nothing new. And what we're going to be able to do is to look at what Paul does here to give us a window into the secret to reaching the mission field right here at our doorstep in the Brazos Valley and around the world. So, let's pick up in Acts 17 beginning in verse 16 and we'll just walk it through down to the end of the chapter. Here's the way it starts.

¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, "What does this babblers wish to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?" ²⁰For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean." ²¹Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

Will you pray with me?

Father, we didn't come here this morning to hear something new but something ancient. Something passed down from generation to generation. The way that Your Son, His blood, His salvation is our only hope of deliverance. And I pray that You would use today as we follow the

life of Paul to shape us and change us. To make us more like Jesus so that we might be more faithful in making Jesus known. We ask these things Christ's name. Amen.

So, do you know how many times a day the average, how many numb. Let's try this again. How many times does a person every day have a conversation with someone else? People have researched this. They've studied how many conversations we tend to average a day. And I'm sure some of you are thinking about extroverts like a Tim Skaggs or a Shane Mikeska. Maybe a Randall Pitcock or Jack McReynolds. And you're like, they're probably 150 conversations a day. And then others of you are more introverted and I won't call anybody out by name because you don't want any social attention on you on Sunday mornings and you help to balance them out. Well, the average number of conversations we have a day is twenty-seven, okay? So, let's multiply that out. You take 27 per day over the course of 6 months. If you multiplied that out, that's nearly five thousand conversations the average person will have over the course of 6 months. Which caught my because not long ago, I came across some new research that looked at how many Christians actually shared their faith with someone else over the last 6 months. And you know what they found? That 38% of us shared the message of Jesus with somebody we knew and 30% of us shared with someone who was a stranger. In other words, right around two thirds of us never shared the Gospel even one time over the course of the past 6 months. I mean, put that in perspective. 5,000 conversations. 5,000 opportunities. Not one that turned to a Gospel conversation. Why? What's holding us back from turning everyday conversations into Gospel conversations? Well, when I look at us, when I look at our church, I don't think it's because we don't care. I don't think it's because we don't know that they need to hear. We know those things. The challenge is not a lack of care. But a lack of confidence. We're not sure how the conversation will go. We're not sure how to turn it from a regular conversation into a Gospel conversation. And because of that, it's just easier to step back rather to lean in. And what we're going to find this morning in Acts 17 is Paul gives us a road map for turning regular conversations into Gospel conversations. And it happens right here in Athens. If you remember in the book of Acts, we're about halfway through it, and the Gospel is going, gone forward from an outpost of the Roman Empire in Israel and it's now spreading to the cultural sinners in Europe and it's reached into Athens in this moment. And Paul is situated here at a place known as the Areopagus, Mars Hill. I remember about a decade ago leading a study abroad trip with some seminary students and sitting right there on Mars Hill, reading through this passage with them, reflecting on it, being able to look up onto the skyline and see the Parthenon seated there, the seat of some of the idol worship that was taking place in that community. And right there where Paul is standing, he brings a word of Gospel truth to the people. And what we're going to find this morning in Acts 17 is that Paul shows us three things that need to be true if we want to reach an increasingly hostile culture by turning everyday conversations into Gospel conversations.

And let's look at the first one back in this section we've already read. We need to see who the lost truly are. We must see who the lost truly are. That's the starting point Paul begins with. In other words, if we want to reach people, we need to see them. And the danger is we get so distracted and busy and self-absorbed. We don't pay attention to the challenges and the opportunities of the people all around us. But I want you to notice the way that Paul sees them. He sees them for who they truly are. And that shows up with his eyes. It shows up with his feet. And it shows up with his mouth. So, let's look at his eyes first. You'll see it to begin with. What does Paul see? What he sees is a culture in captivity. That's why verse 16 says,

¹⁶Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols.

You see that phrase, full of idols. In the original language, it means like the whole city was submerged in them. It was underwater by the weight of all the idolatry that was going on there. He sees this city in captivity to idolatry and his heart is provoked. He's not persuaded but provoked. And what does that mean by provoked? There's this mixture in Paul of both frustration and compassion at what he sees around him. And that's what he sees and it fuels his heart to see the lost reached. You need that frustration to recognize that something isn't right here and I'm willing to do what it takes to speak truth even if it costs me. But you also need that compassion to speak that truth in grace. Paul sees with his eyes the plight of the people and it stirs him to share the truth. But not just his eyes. Look at his feet. Where do his feet take him? And you see three places right here beginning in back in verse 17 that he goes with the Gospel. It says,

¹⁷So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there.

So, there's two places here in verse 17. The synagogue and the marketplace. He goes to his tribe, his religious people, those he's comfortable with in the synagogue. And then he to everyday people in the marketplace. It's equivalent of going down to HEB or Sam's or Costco and having those intentional eyes to see and to take the truth of Jesus there. But there's one more spot that he goes. It's known as the Areopagus. You'll see it described in verse 21. It says,

²¹Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

This was a place where educated elites in that community would gather to share ideas, to compare philosophies, to hear new things. And so you find Paul doing this with his feet, taking the Gospel truth to three different places: to his people, to all people, and to elite people. And it has me thinking about what we just did with our Ireland mission trip that our college team just got back from. We sent them to Dublin to help our church planting friend, Duncan, who's launching their new church in just two weeks from now right there in the city. And as they took themselves across the pond in order to take the message of Jesus there, they encountered people from their own tribe, maybe they grew up around Christianity but haven't embraced it. They took the Gospel to people who were everyday people from Ireland who are just living their life in Dublin. And then they also had the opportunity to take it to those who were the elites there at the University College of Dublin. And that same reality that's true there in Ireland through our missions efforts, we find to be true right here in the Brazos Valley. Because what Paul experienced there, the chance to take the Gospel to these three different types of people, we have that in a college town like this. Surrounded by culture of Christians who grew up in the church have heard enough about Jesus to be condemned by Him but not enough to believe in Him. We've got everyday people all around us who are living their lives at the soccer fields and the baseball fields, and they're in need of Gospel hope. We got elites all around us, the well-educated and the wise who are seeking to find a way to make sense of the world apart from God and we have that truth. We need to follow the feet of Paul.

But notice what happens when his feet, wherever his feet takes him, his mouth follows and what does he say? Look back at the end of verse 18, you'll see there in the second half,

Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

In other words, no matter where Paul went, the Gospel came with him. It was on his lips. He's preaching about Jesus and the resurrection. That's one of the reasons why last week, we went through Romans 10 and mapped out that three circles evangelism tool so that you can have the same toolkit for yourself in conversations. To take Jesus and His resurrection with you. And man, I was so encouraged when I got a text from one of our church members this week and he said, “Philip, after we walked through that last week, I came across a coworker who is wanting to share his faith with somebody he knows and I showed my coworker who's a believer how to do the three circles. And he texted me not long after that that he had had the opportunity through a Gospel conversation to take his friend that doesn't yet know Jesus and walk him through the three circles.” Following in the way of Paul. And what we find in the first part of Acts 17 is that if we want to reach the lost around us, we need to see them for who they truly are. That shows up in our eyes, our feet, and our mouths. But it doesn't stop there. I want you to notice how the text brings us face to face with the second reality starting in verse 22. That we know don't need to just see people how they truly are. We need to share with people why Jesus truly matters. And so let's see how Paul does that beginning in verse 22. It says,

²²So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I also found, I also found an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶And 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, ²⁷that 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, ²⁸for “‘In Him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, “‘For we are indeed His offspring.’” ²⁹Being 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. ³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹because 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.”

I still remember the most nerve-wracking conversation of my life. It took place about 20 years ago. Cami and I had been seriously dating for quite some time. I knew she was the one. And one of the steps along the journey was to sit down with her dad and ask for his blessing in marriage. Any other guys out there feel really uncomfortable going into that conversation? I mean, I know him well. I knew I loved her. We got along great. Our conversations were always normal and natural. I even knew that he was going to say yes. And even still, my stomach

churned inside me. I was just dragging out the conversation. He knew what was about to happen. I knew what was about to happen. But I couldn't turn the corner from a regular conversation to an intentional conversation. Finally about 45 minutes into it, he said to me something that affect, "Philip, is there anything you want to ask me?" And that opened up the opportunity that I needed. But I can't help but wonder how often we feel that same churn and uncertainty when we are with somebody we know needs Jesus but we're not sure how to get it to that Gospel conversation. How do we go from a regular conversation to an intentional Gospel conversation? And what we're going to find here is Paul gives us a road map in this part of Acts 17. He shows us four steps that we need to take if we want to turn a regular conversation into a Gospel conversation. The first one is we need to connect. We need to connect. And that's exactly what we find him doing with the people of Athens back in verse 22. It tells us he's standing in the midst of the Areopagus and he says to the men of Athens, "I perceive that you are very religious." So, he doesn't start with himself. He doesn't start with his message. He starts with them. Where they're at? He sees them for who they truly are and he seeks to connect with them and that connection goes even deeper down in verse 28. Look at what he does. He doesn't quote Scripture. He quotes their own prophets and poets and philosophers. He says, for in him, we live and move and have our being. As even some of your own poets have said, for we are indeed his offspring. And maybe your Bible's like mine and it's got little insets. It looks like it's quoting an Old Testament passage or something like that. But in fact, he's quoting two poets that they would have looked to as authoritative guides for life. And what he says is, he starts with the connection that says, even your best thinkers see what is true about the world. What our needs deeply are. In other words, he puts a finger on the longings, the questions, the concerns, the issues, the desires that they have. He names them. He validates them. He even brings their own authorities into it to show that there is a common starting point, a connection point that can be made. And he uses that connection point as the bridge to his Gospel conversation. And that's exactly the way we need to think about doing it today. That as you're interacting with people that you know need Jesus, you should be listening for the underlying longings and questions and problems and concerns that they're facing. And so often we just pass right over it as we move along in our day. But if we hear their hearts, maybe God will use that to draw us into a connection that will turn the conversation in order to reach those hearts. So, really practically if you find yourself ever getting stuck about how to flip the conversation from a regular conversation to a Gospel conversation, one of the easiest ways I found to do it is when you hear them sharing a problem or an issue or a concern or a longing, you ask them the simple question. Can I tell you about a time that I face something similar and tell you about what helped me? Because when you ask that question, can I tell you at a time that I face something similar and tell you about what helped me, that sparks people's interest in two ways? For one, everybody wants help. We're all trying to figure it out and everybody is open to personal stories and experiences. And so, what happens is you connect and then you connect them to your story in a way that will help them connect to the Gospel story. Paul does that here even by citing their own poets. It begins with connection. But I want you to see what happens next.

The first step in the road map is we need to connect. The second is we need to confront. OK so look at the way Paul confronts their religious belief system. Here's the reality. If Christianity is true, and it is, then what that means is every other belief system, every other world view, it has a flaw. It has a weakness. It's like that Christmas package that your grandmother wrapped and she has literally put tape on every single piece of every seam that's on there. But there's that one little spot where she slipped up and there's a gap there and if you can just get your fingernails

under that, you can start pulling it back and tearing it open. You need that one entry point in order to unmask the whole thing. And that same reality is true when it comes to the way people believe about the things of God. If the Gospel is our only true hope, there is a flaw in every other system. And what Paul is showing us is that once we connect, we need to confront by seeing the flaw and then helping them see the flaw. And notice how he does it there in verse 23. He says to us,

²³For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription: 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

So he sees it. He sees the vulnerability. They've acknowledged it. Maybe there's another god out there. This god that they are ignorant of. That they're uncertain about and he says, what you don't know, let me tell you about it. He confronts them. He brings them face to face. The smartest people in the world admitting their own ignorance about this unknown god and he confronts them with Gospel truth. So, I can think about over the last several years, I've had a series of conversations with a college student that doesn't yet know Jesus. And what I found is the first couple of times I was with him before I could even get to serious conversations about the true message of the Gospel, we had to confront false beliefs that he had about how the world worked. He believed that there's really no such thing as sin. He believed that even somebody is terrible as Adolf Hitler would go to heaven if there is such a place. He believed that all spiritual roads lead to the same god. So, what's good for you is good for you. What's good for me is good for me. And what we had to do was have conversations that confronted the errors of those. And I remember the moment we're sitting in Fuego when he looked at me and said, "Philip, I thought I knew what I really believed about life but I'm realizing the more we talk that I don't." That's the kind of confrontation that Paul is getting at here. These people think they know the way the world works but now they're coming face to face with the reality that they don't. And when they come face to face with that reality, it now gives them an openness to the Gospel message.

Which takes us to the third step in the road map. We start by connecting, then confronting. But after we confront, the third step is we correct. And we see Paul doing exactly that there. He gives them a correct view of the God of the universe. He's seen who they truly are. He's shown them the true nature of their situation. And now he's going to show them the true nature of God. What we notice there is he lays out five different ways to understand God in verses 24 through 31. So, in verse 24, he portrays God as creator. When he says,

²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man,

And then he goes on in verse 25 and shows God to be sustainer. He says,

²⁵nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything.

And then after that, he presents God as king. In verse 26 he says,

²⁶And 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,

And then after he quotes their poets down in verse 29, he displays God as father. When he says,

²⁹Being 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.

And then he finishes giving his picture of God by showing Him to be judge down at the end, at the beginning of verse 31 when he says,

³¹because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed;

So, Paul takes these people who think they understand eternal things. He confronts them with their own flaw in their system; that of the unknown God. And then he comes behind that by correcting a right view. That He is Creator, Sustainer, King, Father, Judge. He gives this glorious picture of who God is so that they can come face to face with the reality that they do not yet truly know Him.

Which takes us to the last step in the in the road map. We connect, we confront, we correct, and then the last step, number four, is we contend. We contend for the truths of the Gospel. So, he's brought them face to face with their own sin. Brought them face to face with their own misunderstandings of God. And now, he brings him once again face to face with Jesus. And the way he does that is he starts in verse 27 by as he's describing God showing them why God has made Himself known. In verse 27 it tells us that they should seek God and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him. Yet, He is actually not far off from each one of us. Paul says, the God of the universe wants us to seek Him. He wants us to know Him. In fact, he tells them, He is not far off. There maybe some of you in the room today are watching by video that need to hear that word. God feels so distant from you today. He feels absent. It's as if He doesn't care. And what Paul is saying here is He's not far off. He wants you to seek Him. And the reason He wants that is because He's calling for a response from the people of Athens and putting that call for response in front of each one of us down in verse 30. He says,

³⁰The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent,

Paul doesn't just give them the truth of the Gospel. He calls them to respond to it in repentance and in faith. From turning away from our sins and turning to Jesus for the deliverance of those sins. And the root for that, the reason for why we should repent and believe is seen right there at the end of this section in verse 31.

³¹because 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.”

So this morning, the Bible is saying, make no mistake. For everyone of us, a judgment is coming. That a holy God who created the universe, even you. Who made it perfect. Even though it was ruptured and broken by sin. Even though a curse is upon us. Even though we face that guilt and shame and condemnation in this life, it says, make no mistake, we will face a judgement for the way we live our life. But there's a promise there too because the man, the God man, who will judge, is the one who's already faced the judgment Himself. That's what we're preparing for this Easter season. That Jesus stood in our place, condemned on that cross, crown of thorns, bearing the curse upon His head, spear piercing His side, blood flowing out, demonstrating the way that His blood can wash us free from our sins. And He goes to the grave in order to defeat it 3 days later so the resurrected King can bring rescue to sinners like you and me. That's the hope of Easter. That's the call that Paul is putting in front of the people of Athens and to us this morning. And what I want you to notice about the way this passage finishes. Then the last few verses, we see a third reality here. We see that we must sense how the lost truly respond. We need to sense how the lost truly respond. What we'll find in verses 32 through 34 is there's three primary ways that everybody responds to the Gospel. Do we see them here with Paul? You'll see them in your own life. Here's what it says.

³²Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, "We will hear you again about this." ³³So Paul went out from their midst. ³⁴But some men joined him and believed, among them also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Three possible ways to respond. I want to show you each one of them here in the text. The first way some people may respond when we present the Gospel to them is they respond as skeptics. There are some who respond as skeptics at the beginning of verse 32.

³²Now, when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked.

They taunted. They rejected. They mocked. They look at the truths of the Gospel and they turn away from it. It's like when Jesus speaks about the parable of the seeds, the ones that fall on the road, that hardened ground and they don't get into the soil in order to start sprouting. And the birds of the air come and pluck them up. That skeptical, cynical heart, we can often experience when we present the truths of the Gospel. But that's not the only way people respond. Some respond as skeptics but others respond as seekers. So, look at the second half of verse 32. It says,

³²...but others said, "We will hear you again about this."

So, they don't taunt. They think about it. They don't reject. They reflect on it. They want to hear Paul again. They want to know more about this. It's not a red light. Maybe it's more like a yellow light. There's a sense of openness and an interest. They want to find ways to know more about God. And as we're writing down those prayer cards again today, I want you to ask yourself the question, who in your life seems like they're actively seeking the truths of God? Have you written their name down this season? Have you committed to pray for them? Maybe you can turn them in and come pray at the steps over them after the message is done. But there's one other way that people respond to the Gospel. Some as skeptics, others as seekers, but we see at the very end of this passage, some respond as saints. Saints, holy ones who trust in Jesus,

receive His righteousness, are made holy by Him, and follow the way of the Gospel that has been shared to them. And you find that there in verse 33 when Paul, when it says,

³³Paul went out from their midst and some joined them and believed. Among whom also were Dionysius, the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

So, instead of taunt, they trust. Instead of reject Jesus, they begin to rely on Him. Paul leaves and they go with them. They don't know what they're stepping into but they trust his truth of the Gospel enough to follow after him. And do you see that man that's mentioned in verse 34 named Dionysius? His name picks up on one of the Greek gods, Dionysius, the god of the of the grape harvest, who is celebrated through wine and debauchery and parties. Perhaps he grew up in that lifestyle. But when he encountered Jesus, it changed everything for him. In fact, the ancient historian Eusebius says, that the very first Christian bishop in the city of Athens was Dionysius. The very first martyr who gave his life for Jesus in Athens was this man who heard the Gospel for the very first time when Paul spoke it on Mars Hill. That's the hope that we have when we take the Gospel forward. It's one of the reasons why I was so encouraged by one of the prayer updates that came in on the prayer cards this week. So one of y'all that shared about a man in your life that you've been praying for years, trying to have Gospel conversations with. And not long ago, he had reached out to our church members and said, "Hey, I know you prayed for me regularly. You want to talk about Gospel things regularly but I'm just going to ask you to stop. I'm not interested anymore. I don't want this." So, if you're putting them in this response cycle, he had, he had hardened in his skepticism. The red light was flashing as big as can be. And this man had written down that guy's name on a prayer card and he wrote in as an update to say, "Out of nowhere, this man had reached out to him and told our church member, I love you and will you please start praying for me again? I want to get together soon." Look, I don't know where you find yourself this morning. Whether you walked in here and you don't know Jesus, you feel like God is far from you and you hear these truths about Jesus and His resurrection and you're pierced to the heart recognizing you need Him. Or if you are one of the faithful members of this church seeking to see the Gospel go out to the lost and dying world around us. What I know is that Acts 17 is giving us a road map on how to do it. And we want to be a church where every generation is reaching the next generation. And in order for that to happen, we need to be prayerfully considering how we turn everyday conversations into Gospel conversations. The challenge I want to leave you with this morning is when it comes to sharing your faith with others, God is not looking for perfection. He's looking for persistence. And may we walk persistently and sharing faithfully the hope of the Gospel this Easter season.

Will you pray with me towards that end right now?

Father, as You ready our hearts to come to these steps and pray this morning, seek Your face for those who don't yet know Jesus. I'm praying that if You haven't laid someone on the heart of each of the people in here, who need to know the hope of heaven and the truth of the Gospel. That You would use this time to lay that on their heart, to write that on the card, to lift those people up in this season as we head towards Easter. And Lord, I'm asking, in the days ahead that You would open our eyes to see the needs all around us. That You would open our mouths to share the truth of Jesus. And that You would open the hearts of those who don't yet know Him to embrace the only hope they can find to the blood of your son. In whose name we pray. Amen.