

**HOPE LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**ORDER OF WORSHIP May 17, 2020**

**Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness (stand)**

P: In the name of God, the Father, Who has created all things in the universe for the sake of His dear children.

**C: And the Son, Who has redeemed His people from their sins,**

P: And the Spirit, Who moves us to accept the gifts of our salvation and of God's creation with joy.

**C: We gather for renewal in worship.**

*Silence for reflection and self-examination*

P: Let us confess our sins to God, our Father.

**C: From depths of grief I cry to you O Lord. My voice is trying to reach your heart and, break through with cries and sighing. If you keep a record of our sin and hold against us what we have thought and said and done, who then, can stand before you?**

P: God wants you to be absolutely sure of His love and to be totally confident that you have His full forgiveness for all of your sins because of what Jesus Christ has done for you. As you trust in Him, you become as dear to the Father as His own Son and can hear Him speak to you, "This is My dear child, My chosen, My child in whom I delight."

**C: Amen.**

**KYRIE**

P: In peace let us pray to the Lord.

**C: Lord, have mercy.**

P: For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

**C: Lord, have mercy.**

P: For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

**C: Lord, have mercy.**

P: For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

**C: Lord, have mercy.**

P: Help, save, comfort and defend us gracious Lord.

**C: Amen.**

## **THE HYMN OF PRAISE**

**ALL: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth. Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father: We worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God: You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

## **HYMN LSB 584 Faith and Truth and Life Bestowing**

**Faith and truth and life bestowing,  
Open now the Scriptures, Lord,  
Seed to life eternal sowing,  
Scattered on the wind abroad.  
Let not hearts, Your Word receiving,  
Like a barren field be found,  
Choked with thorns and unbelieving,  
Shallow earth or stony ground.**

**May the Spirit's pow'r unceasing  
Bring to life the hidden grain,  
Daily in our hearts increasing,  
Bearing fruit that shall remain.  
So in Scripture, song, and story,  
Savior, may Your voice be heard.  
Till our eyes behold Your glory  
Give us ears to hear Your Word.**

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS**

### **Acts 17:16-31; 17:32-34**

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious.

For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’ “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”... When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” At that, Paul left the Council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

## **Psalm 111**

**(Read Responsively-Reader=unbold Congregation=BOLD)**

Praise the LORD. I will extol the LORD with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly.

**Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.**

Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever.

**He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.**

He provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever.

**He has shown his people the power of his works, giving them the lands of other nations.**

The works of his hands are faithful and just; all his precepts are trustworthy.

**They are established for ever and ever, enacted in faithfulness and uprightness.**

He provided redemption for his people; he ordained his covenant forever— holy and awesome is his name.

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.**

## **1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 2:1-5**

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified:

a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength...And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

## **GOSPEL**

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**C: Glory to You, O Lord.**

### **Luke 10:17-21**

The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to You, O Christ**

## **HYMN LSB 816 From All that Dwell Below the Skies**

**From all that dwell below the skies  
Let the Creator's praise arise;  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Let the Redeemer's name be sung  
Through ev'ry land by ev'ry tongue.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

**Eternal are Thy mercies, Lord;  
Eternal truth attends Thy Word.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Thy praise shall sound from shore to shore  
Till suns shall rise and set no more.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

All praise to God the Father be,  
All praise, eternal Son, to Thee.  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Whom with the Spirit we adore  
Forever and forevermore:  
Alleluia, alleluia!  
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

### Sermon- Paul and the Athenians

Between three and five hundred years before the time of Christ, the Greeks were laying the foundation of western civilization. In what historians call the “golden age of Greece,” the city-state of Athens gave birth to what we call the arts and the sciences. Plato invented philosophy. Aristotle invented logic and the science of biology. Sophocles invented tragic drama. Aristophanes invented comic drama. Euclid invented geometry. Archimedes discovered some of the first laws of physics. And Pericles, the king, established the world’s first democracy. Another Greek by the name of Alexander the Great conquered the known world and brought Greek culture and the Greek language to the people he conquered. Classical Greek became the common language of the entire world, which is why the New Testament was written in Greek. By Paul’s time—a little over three centuries later—Greece’s military and political power had waned and the world was ruled by Rome, but the Athenians were proud of their heritage and considered themselves superior to the rest of the world. So when Paul, a lowly itinerant Jewish preacher showed up in Athens, he knew he had his work cut out for him in getting the Athenians to listen to his message. His visit is recorded in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Book of Acts*, which is our first lesson for today.

The first thing Paul noticed about Athens was that the city was full of statues of pagan gods and goddesses. The Greeks practiced polytheism which means “many gods” and refers to the practice of worshiping nature gods and trying to elicit favors from them by offering them sacrifices. If there was a drought and you needed rain you offered up a sacrifice to the rain god. If you wanted an abundant crop of wheat you offered up a sacrifice to the god of the harvest. Over the years the Greeks had developed an elaborate polytheistic mythology of gods and goddesses who ruled over virtually all phases of their lives. There was Ares, the god of war, Aphrodite the goddess of love, Poseidon the god of the sea, and Zeus, who ruled over them all. Even though the Greeks were quite advanced intellectually, they still worshipped in a primitive pagan way.

Paul set about his evangelistic work in his typical way: first he went to the Jewish synagogue and preached the Gospel to the Jews and the Greeks who had been converted to the God of Moses. Then he took his message out to the streets, engaging anyone who was willing to talk with him. Soon he was confronted by representatives of the two major schools of philosophy in Athens: Epicureanism and Stoicism. The stoics believed that reason was the highest good. The epicureans believed that pleasure was the highest good. When they heard Paul speaking about Jesus and his resurrection they invited him to accompany them to a meeting place called the Areopagus. The Areopagus was a forum where intellectuals met to

discuss the arts and sciences. It was located on Mars Hill, a short distance from the Parthenon, the Greek architectural marvel that still stands today. The people who met at the Areopagus prided themselves on their open-mindedness and willingness to listen to a wide variety of viewpoints. Luke writes of them that, “all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.” They were like the man of whom it was said the best idea he ever had was the last one he heard. Or the man who they said was so open-minded that his brains were falling out. Up to a point, open-mindedness can be a good thing; but it can also be an enemy of the truth. In any case, Paul was invited to share his ideas with them and so he did. And what he said to them is recorded in *Acts 17*.

For centuries scholars have studied Paul’s speech and have declared to be a masterpiece of rhetoric, or oratory. It contains subtle allusions to famous Greek poets and philosophers from the golden age of Greece, which would have pleased his audience. He starts off by mentioning that as he was examining the statues of gods and goddesses that filled their city he found an empty pedestal with an inscription that read: “to an unknown god.” Apparently the idea was that if you couldn’t find a god or goddess you wanted to worship, you could make up your own god or goddess and worship them. There was a joke circulating around Athens at the time that the gods were becoming so numerous some of them might have to move to the suburbs. Paul, however, uses this image of “an unknown god” to introduce his theme: that he will now reveal this unknown God to them. Now Paul’s speech follows a different pattern than his sermons usually followed. In his sermons, Paul would point to the Old Testament scriptures and their prophecies of the Messiah and then show how Jesus had fulfilled those prophecies and therefore must be the Messiah. But in this speech Paul doesn’t argue from scripture; he argues from reason and logic—hoping to find common ground with his audience. He begins by saying that since there is such a thing as a creation—which no one can deny—there must be a God who created it. Where there is creation there must be a creator. Logical. Then he says that God has made his existence known in his creation so that we mankind could see him, reach out to him and find him. He reasons that a God powerful enough to create the entire universe far exceeds man’s ability to portray him in pictures or statues. Therefore by worshipping statues they are not worshipping God, they are worshipping figments of their own imaginations—in other words imaginary gods. And imaginary gods are idols because anything that man worships other than God is an idol. In the past, Paul says, God has overlooked such idolatry but now he commands all people to repent and worship him alone. Moreover, God has come in the form of a man and has set a date when he will judge those who fail to worship him. Finally, he has given proof that he is that man by rising from the dead. Now Paul was probably doing pretty well with his speech up to the point, but when he mentioned that Jesus had risen from the dead, he broke an ironclad rule of the Areopagus. All opinions and topics were welcome for discussion except one: that the dead could come back to life. Since everybody knew that that was impossible, the subject was verboten. So Paul’s claim of a resurrection would have fallen like a sledge hammer on their ears. It reminds me of a joke about a brilliant man who had degrees in medical science, the law, and pastoral ministry, but who had savagely murdered his wife and had been committed to an asylum for the criminally insane. After several years of imprisonment during which he was a model inmate, he was brought before a board of psychologists who asked him what he would do if he were released into society. Speaking very calmly and thoughtfully he said, “I’ve given that a great deal of thought. I could take the practice of medicine and help people in that way.

Or, I could take up the practice of law and help people who can't afford a lawyer. Or, I could be a pastor and minister to people spiritually. Or, I could become a teapot.

When Paul affirmed that a dead man had come back to life, he might as well as said that the dead man had become a teapot because that was exactly how it hit his audience.

It drew sneers and we are told that he attracted very few followers in Athens.

Paul's audience at the Areopagus is a classic example of how intellectual pride can hinder people from coming to a knowledge of the truth. Jesus said that God "...hides things from the wise and learned and reveals them to little children. "And still today, so-called wise and learned ignore God's word and follow their own paths of reasoning all the way to the grave. Paul's erudition and range of knowledge were vast: he not only knew the scriptures forwards and backwards, he knew Greek history, poetry and philosophy and could both speak and write Greek perfectly. Yet all his worldly knowledge was useless to him when it came to winning Greek souls for Christ. He tried to use logic and rhetoric rather than God's word to appeal to them—and his speech was a bust. The only truth that saves and sanctifies us is God's word. Paul must have come to that same conclusion. Immediately after this incident, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth He refers to his arrival in Corinth in his *First Letter to the Corinthians*: "when I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power." No more rhetoric, no more intellectual showmanship, just the message of the cross presented in weakness, fear and trembling.

[Paula Stumph Visit] Paula's message was not the words she spoke; it was her trembling lips and shaking hands that testified to her faith. God has given us minds to use and reason to employ and both of them are great gifts. But the greatest gift of all is God's word of truth through which he saves us and sanctifies us. Jesus said, "If you continue in my word then you are truly my disciples. And you will know the truth and the truth will make you free.

"Chastened by his experience in Athens, Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to the gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God....for the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

Amen.

## APOSTLE'S CREED

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

## **THE PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH**

P: Father in heaven, Please draw close to Glenda Colburn and give her peace upon the death of her husband, Milt. Comfort the entire Colburn family with the knowledge that Milt is even now rejoicing in heaven with Jesus Christ. For Donna Mattmullers sister, Jane Burns with ovarian cancer, now in hospice. Father, draw near to Sue Dunbar's brother who has advanced cancer. Strengthen him in faith and give him peace. Father, guide and sustain us as we recover from the Covid 19 pandemic. As we emerge from isolation and return to our normal way of life, remind us to conduct ourselves safely. Bless and guide those who are conducting research that they may soon find a cure.

In Jesus' name,

**C: Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

## **HYMN LBS 849 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness**

**Praise the One who breaks the darkness**

**With a liberating light;**

**Praise the One who frees the pris'ners**

**Turning blindness into sight.**

**Praise the One who preached the Gospel,**

**Healing ev'ry dread disease,**

**Calming storms, and feeding thousands**

**With the very Bread of peace.**

**Praise the One who blessed the children**

**With a strong, yet gentle word;**

**Praise the One who drove out demons**

**With the piercing two-edged sword.**

**Praise the one who brings cool water**

**To the desert's burning sand;**

**From this Well comes living water**

**Quenching thirst in ev'ry land.**

**Let us praise the Word incarnate,**

**Christ, who suffered in our place.**

**Jesus died and rose victorious**

**That we may know God by grace.**

**Let us sing for joy and gladness,**

**Seeing what our God has done;**

**Let us praise the true Redeemer,**

**Praise the One who makes us one.**

**BLESSING**

P: The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and † give you peace.

**C: Amen.**