

**Scandal to the Jews and Foolishness to the Greeks**  
**John 5:16-27, Acts 17:16-21**

Friends, an unnamed folk musician and night club owner once said “in the music scene it’s really cool to “search” for God...it’s not very cool to actually find Him!”

So, the writer of the song we just heard asks “What if God was one of us?” Its great question isn’t it – and when we hear it we might think that we’re listening to the honest musings of someone who is truly seeking to know more about God and his relationship to human beings.

However, a closer examination of the lyrics indicates the singer isn’t really interested in a receiving a straight forward answer to this question. She’s more interested in speculating about the possibilities that would occur if indeed God was one of us. If *God* was one of **us**. What if its actually us who are God?

In other words she says question what you think you know about God, speculate on what it might mean if God wasn’t who we thought He was? I mean how can one really know the truth about God for certain anyways...

It’s like that catchphrase from the X-files “the truth is out there” but if Sully and Mulder ever found it...well the TV show would be over. So the **quest** for the truth has become more important than finding the **truth**, and as long as you appear to be looking for the truth, you needn’t worry about whether or not you actually find it.

Friends, It’s cool to “search” for God...it’s just not cool to actually find Him.

And the Apostle Paul ran across a similar sentiment while he was in the city of Athens.

As we read in the passage of scripture today, the people of Athens loved nothing more than to spend all of their time talking about and listening to the latest ideas.

Yet in spite of all this learning and discussing they had not discovered the truth or found God and the fact that their city was chock full of idols was proof of this.

And when Paul looked around and saw this it greatly upset him. Why? Because there is nothing more frustrating than

sharing with people who seem to be interested in learning about the truth, who are open to talking about God, who are curious about Christ only to find out that they just enjoy having religious discussions.

It's like being a salesperson at one of those kiosks in the mall who thinks he's found a prospective customer and spends all sorts of time showing the person the product, answering questions, talking about financing options – only to find out the person just likes looking at curling irons...they weren't planning on buying anything at all!

Friends, there are times when we run into the same thing. Neighbors, friends, colleagues who appear to be interested in hearing the good news about Jesus Christ from us, but in reality they just want to compare our view of Jesus with what they've read from Deepak Choprah, or they want to see what we think about what the Da Vinci Code says about Jesus.

Friends, the challenge that Paul faced in Athens has become the dominant challenge for us as Christians today our post-modern secular culture.

That is to say - in the spirit of being educated, tolerant and searching for the truth about God our culture and the people in it are willing to discuss, speculate and dialogue about Jesus, here's some examples...

A number of years ago "The Jesus Seminar" was featured on the cover of MacLean's magazine. The cover story chronicled the attempts of a group of scholars who were searching for an answer to the question – who was the "historical" Jesus. Guess what they eventually concluded... *"we can't really be certain about who he was."*

The author of the DaVinci Code, Dan Brown, relies heavily on the notion that Jesus as we know him from the bible was a myth generated over time. He uses this to form the basis for the plot of his book.

And the average person on the street will more than likely agree that Jesus was a good moral teacher who exemplified what godly living was like and it wouldn't do us much harm to imitate Him.

But, friends –for as much press and attention that Jesus receives in and from our culture, we have not discovered who He really is- so like ancient Athens our culture today is chock full of idols.

Because it's cool to speculate about Jesus, it's not cool to make a definitive statement about Him because friends what we would discover about Him would overturn life as we know it.

And that's what was happening to the Jews in the second passage we read this morning. For generations they had been waiting for the Messiah, and for new era of freedom, blessing and prosperity that He would usher in, starting by delivering them from Roman oppression.

But when Jesus shows up - instead of attacking the Romans he begins to attack the self-interested, self-serving views of the Messiah which the Jews had acquired, by revealing the true nature and work of the Messiah.

And when they were faced with this truth, the Jews did not like it. The text says they persecuted Jesus and tried to kill Him.

And what was the truth which was so scandalous that it provoked this reaction from them?

Vs. 18 says “*He was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God*”

Friends, it's not cool to find God, and it's even less cool to claim to be God. It's far more politically correct to suggest that some unassuming stranger on the bus trying to make his way home could be God – if God were one of us.

But yet in the midst of all this we regularly profess that we believe...

*in Jesus Christ, God's only Son our Lord*

*Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,*

*Born of the virgin Mary*

*Suffered under Pontius Pilate,*

*was crucified, died and was buried,*

*He descended into Hell.*

*On the third day He rose again from the dead*

*He ascended into Heaven,*

*and is seated at the right hand of God the Father, Almighty  
From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.*

Not much speculation here is there? Friends the Apostle's creed is a very clear statement about who Jesus is and what He has accomplished. Look at what it means....

I believe in Jesus – His name in Hebrew means “He saves”, Christ is a title which means “the anointed or chosen one”

I believe in the one who was chosen to save! And this implies there is something we need saving from, and it's not ignorance, poverty, intolerance or oppression – its sin.

I need to be saved from my inability to be a faithful covenant partner with God my creator! And so does everyone else – the fact that Athens, and our culture are full of idols proves it. We're not supposed to worship anything but God; however our tendency is to worship everything but God.

And if Jesus Christ wasn't God – then we shouldn't worship Him either, except that as we read today – Christ claims God as

his Father, and He claims to do the same work as God – giving and restoring the gift of life and having the authority to judge, and according to the scripture this makes Him equal to God.

In fact in John 10:30 Jesus claims – “*I and the Father are one!*” and 10:38 “*the Father is in me, and I in the Father.*”

Friends, Jesus is God and there is no one else who claims this, He is God's only Son. We may therefore worship Him and not sin as we would if we worshiped anything or followed anyone else.

So we worship Jesus Christ, God's only Son...who is our Lord

And that rubs a lot of people the wrong way – calling Jesus “Lord.” But we do. He is our Lord, He gets first claim on our lives, on our allegiance on our obedience, not the economy, not the environment, and not the values and ideals of our culture – He does.

So when we are studying at a secular university our loyalty lies first with Christ, not with objective scholarship or reason.

When we are running a business, our loyalty lies first with Christ, not with profitability.

When we are living our lives and raising our family, our loyalty lies first with Christ, not to ourselves and our happiness and fulfillment or our family's.

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son *our Lord!*

And friends – these beliefs about Jesus are not the product of legends, born of uncertain origins in the mysterious ages gone by, nor are they myths by which we seek to explain why things happen in our world.

No, they are historical facts. God's Son was born into the history of our world, He was conceived, and came into this world in exactly the same way you and I entered into it.

He was in every way a real person, who lived a real life with a time, date, location - so we say He suffered under Pontius Pilate, who was a roman governor in the province of Judea, from 26-36 AD.

However, while He was born into this world like everyone else, his conception and birth from the virgin Mary makes Him unique.

Not so much in the fact that this biological miracle proves He is God's Son, its more of a statement that humanity is not able to conceive of and produce the one who was chosen to save us.

Being born of a virgin means that Jesus is the kind of savior that only God is able to provide.

Thus he is symbolically conceived in a young woman who has not yet known a husband, this savior who will conceive new life in the hearts of those who have not yet known their creator.

And He will do so because He will become the perfect covenant partner, one who will stand in the place of those who can't keep the covenant.

Only God can make a way when there seems to be no way possible, only God could provide someone who could keep the

covenant on our behalf, and also pay the penalty for it having been broken, and renew it so that it can never be broken again.

So Christ was crucified, died and was buried – in his death and descent into hell he paid the penalty on our behalf, and simultaneously... He initiated a new covenant with God through the shedding of his blood.

And this is the amazing part – because He was resurrected back to life, as a perfect covenant partner – there is no longer any danger or chance of the covenant being broken – a permanent bond between humanity and God has been formed

So Christ in his resurrected humanity has been taken up into the very presence of God, into heaven and as the perfect covenant partner God has honored him, and given him authority over all things. Jesus Christ is the master of the Universe!

And as we heard in scripture this morning Jesus says that he has been given the authority to judge, when He was seated at God's right hand in heaven that authority was confirmed.

And friends this means that everyone is accountable to Him. They are accountable for what they have done with the life that Christ and the Father have given to them.

The are accountable to have lived as faithful covenant partners with God.

And the creed states that believe on day Christ will return to judge, to hold us accountable. He will evaluate everyone – you and I, and everyone who has ever lived - the living and the dead, and He will determine if we have truly been faithful covenant partners.

And friends, it doesn't matter what you think about this, it matters what Christ thinks about it!

But, lest we despair because we are aware of our own inability to be faithful to God we must remember that Christ was the perfect covenant partner in our place.

So we anticipate judgment not with fear and dread, but with hope because we have placed our faith and our trust in Christ's

accomplishments and not in our own. We have realized that we are unable, and can never hope to be faithful covenant partners with God and we have confessed this to Christ and asked for forgiveness and mercy and stated our need for Him to stand in our place.

So judgment day, whenever it may come...holds no fear for us, but instead the promise that what was accomplished in Christ will be fully transferred to us – by the grace and mercy of God

Friends we will made perfect, perfect covenant partners for God and we will live in the renewed earth and heavens enjoying that relationship for eternity! Doesn't that sound amazing.

So you know what I say to that? Forget the journey – I want to get to that destination! That why we pray Come Lord Jesus! That's why we pray – Your Kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven!

Why would we want to continue to muck around searching, wondering, questioning, speculating about God, about truth,

about who Jesus really was, about whether or not God was one of us!

Here are the facts friends; this is the truth! This is who Jesus was and is, and will be! Believe it, believe in it – base your life on it!

And the next time someone wants to tell you their latest theory about Jesus, you can respond by saying “well that's interesting, but it's not correct...let me summarize the truth about Jesus for you...

***I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son our Lord.....***

But friends, realize this will make us the skunk at the garden party!

2 Corinthians 2:14-16. <sup>15</sup> *Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing.* <sup>16</sup> *To those who are perishing, we are a dreadful smell of death and doom. But to those who are being saved, we are a life-giving perfume.*

It will be viewed as foolishness by those who refuse to believe it is possible to truly know anything about God, and it will be viewed as scandalous by those who realize what the life changing implications of such knowledge would actually mean for them.

But friends, there are people around us who are being saved. God is working in their hearts and in their minds and they are truly eager to know – they don't want to keep on searching for God, they don't want to continually speculate about Jesus – they are waiting to hear the truth about Him, they want to find God.

So, do not let the fact that so many around us think it is “cool to search for God but not cool to find Him” prevent you from continuing to boldly proclaim – I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son our Lord....

Because, there are those who need to hear it, they want to know and we can tell them.

Friends, in the Body of Christ its cool to search for those who need to hear the good news; it's not very cool if they can't actually find it.

Amen.