

July 30, 2023
The Ninth Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Matt Duerr

The Seven C's of Christian Doctrine-The Acts 17 Block

Grace, Mercy and peace be to you from God our Father, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Last week we embarked on a new sermon series, The Seven C's of the Christian Faith. The seven c's of Christian doctrine and it's really a way to prepare us for an effectual apology, or defense of what we believe. As we saw in last week's sermon, Christianity, the Church, is losing relevance in the world and especially among the youth in America. They see no relevance to the church and yet we're called to be witnesses, and to bring the good news of the gospel to them. And so, we're focusing on how to build a foundation; a foundation of truth to share with them. What is the underpinning block of that foundation? Sola Scriptura; God's Word.

But I have a few comments coming out of last week's sermon and I like comments I like questions I like challenges. So I thank you for them because it lets me know where we are at. The concerns that people have and let me just first of all start out by saying, when I refer to scientists and I'm going to refer to scientists today in the sermon. I am referring to those who have embarked on the study of the sciences, biology, botany, zoology, anatomy, etc. physics, chemistry. I am not calling everybody who has a degree in higher education areas, or you know a doctorate in sociology, or history; I'm not referring to them as scientists. Let me just make that very clear. I'm speaking only of those in the scientific fields.

How do we develop a good apology built on scripture? I think the best thing that we can do is see if we can find a parallel for today in scripture and see how God dealt with something like we have today before. And I think we find that in Acts chapter 17. It's Paul when he gets to Athens. Now, first of all, Paul, we call him Saint Paul, he's a pretty hard one to try to measure up to, right? Wrong. Because Paul was just like you and me. But Paul understood something, and we see what he understood when he speaks in Acts Chapter 9 and he speaks of his conversion. Because he was out arresting people to have them killed for believing in Jesus.

You remember the story, God stopped him on the road to Damascus, blinded him, told him to go and wait for someone to come and talk to him. God sent Ananias. Ananias didn't want to go but God said to Ananias; and I quote, "Go (that's Ananias) he (that's Paul) is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles." So Paul understood that he was a chosen instrument and he was called to take the word of God to the Gentiles. And we also are like Paul. We have been called

and told, 'go and make disciples of all nations.' So we are all called. Paul understood you have to rely on the Holy Spirit and so do we. But let's see how the Holy Spirit worked with Paul.

This takes us now to our gospel message, the Parable of the Sower; sowing seed. Some lands on the road, some on rocky soil, some among the weeds, some on good soil. That on the good soil grows up and great harvest is made. The question that comes is, what was first the sowing of a seed, or preparing the soil? And now when we go to our Acts 17, New Testament reading, we see the answer. First, we read that when Paul got into Athens, he was "greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols." But maybe worse than them being totally Pagan was what comes five verses later. Listen carefully to this and see if maybe this sounds familiar. All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas. We would call that a sound bite generation. They want to hear what's the latest thing. And then embrace it and run with it until they hear the latest thing which they embrace and run with it. And like today, they were interested in new truths because the old truths just weren't holding up. That leads to a generation of believing that there's many truths or many pathways to happiness. In fact, when it comes to the United States, I'd like you to consider what President Obama said while he was president. "Whatever we once were, we are no longer a Christian nation."

So, like Paul, we need to understand the times. We need to understand that we no longer live in a Christian society. But rather we live in an Acts 17 society. It's not like Peter preaching to the people at Pentecost in Acts chapter two; who knew there was a God, who knew the Old Testament and the gospel resonated. We're dealing with people who don't know Acts. Notice what Paul does; before he sows the seed he prepares the soil. He embraces that which distressed him, the many temples. He says, "men of Athens I see that in every way you are very religious." He compliments them. He understood what Peter said first Peter 3:15 always be prepared to give a defense for the hope that you have. But do it with gentleness and respect. What is more gentle than complementing? You are very religious; I can see that you are so religious that as I came into town I notice you have a temple to the unknown God; you guys are religious. I am here to tell you about Him. He takes what they believe, compliments them on it, and says now let me fill you in on the rest of the story. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

He's found common ground and where is his first step? The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth. He starts with creation. And from there God is LORD, He's creator were the created. Adam and Eve were

real created people. Adam and Eve chose poorly. We're going to talk about that next week and the corruption phase. But we know the result, the wages of sin is death and God has told Satan when the Messiah comes the seed of the woman He's going to crush your head and put an end to everything you've done.

That's the message Paul gave. All old testament until the very end, Jesus. What was the reaction? Some mocked, that's the seed on the road. Some wanted to hear more, probably the rocky soil or the weedy soil. And some believed. When I think about today there's a lot of mocking of Christianity to make Christianity irrelevant. It reminds me of something that well some say Mark Twain said, some say Will Rogers says some say Walter Mondale said, some say that Ronald Reagan said. I don't know I just like what was said. It does I have to say sound kind of Twainish. "I'm not bothered by what he knows. What bothers me is that what he knows ain't so."

And so that takes us back to last week and what I said about science, consensus science versus observed science. We will hear people say 'the Bible is not reliable, everybody says so.' The reality is, it ain't so! Ask people why they say the Bible is unreliable, you'll hear them say science has proved it. Ask them, really how? I thought science was you observe something, you hypothesize, you repeat, you test. How do you do that with the Bible? Science and the Bible in terms of verification don't work together. Well, it's been improperly translated! Really, such as what? Well, it's been poorly transmitted, I mean passed down over all the years, translated over and over, ... it's just, we have no idea what it originally said. Really? Are you sure? Do you have evidence of that? The reality is this, the Bible is extremely reliable. In fact, a guy named John Dixon wrote a book called the Christ files that was a very short summation focusing on 10 different areas really of how accurate the Bible is. He points out that from an archaeological standpoint, the Bible stands above all in terms of its archaeological accuracy. Whether it be stuff that we have recently found in Egypt that totally supports what is found in the book of Exodus; to things about Babylon and Persia and the Assyrians. And over and over archaeology backs the Bible up.

When it comes to that translation business, that's why the Dead Sea Scrolls you know back in the 1950s, they found these scrolls in in clay jars in you know in in cave in Palestine. And why were they so important? Well because among those were Hebrews scrolls of the Old Testament books. Now the book of Isaiah that they found, for instance dates in around 200 years before Jesus. OK so, 2200 years old, written on animal skin, you know when you're trying to unroll it, it all falls apart see by a lot of Scotch tape and you spend years with magnifying glasses and putting it together. What did they find? That that Hebrew translation of Isaiah lines up

almost perfectly with what we have today. There's only three differences. If I remember them correctly, it's that in the 200 year before Jesus one, it twice has holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty. Whereas the modern translation has holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty. So two extra holies and then that phrase 'I will remember their sins no more,' the s was missing. So three words; holy, holy, sins versus sin; or a grand total of 9 letters difference in the English vernacular. Try finding something else that accurate. That's amazing!

And then it comes to, well, its all written by these religious Christian people. You know they're all biased. You're right, that's who wrote it, but does that make it wrong? For instance, did Jesus really exist? Was He known as the Messiah? As the King of kings? Was He crucified? Did He actually die? Did He rise from the dead? Did it impact his disciples to the point that they were willing to die for Him? We know that, not from scripture, but from the writings of the Greek intellectual Sellases who wrote me 175 the Greek satirist Lucius of Samosata, who wrote between 1:15 and 280 from the Roman historian Suetonius, Tacitus, Pliny the younger, and Thalous who by the way, the threw in the thing about the sun going out while Jesus was dying. My favorite is Josephus a Jew who the Romans hired to write a history of what was going on in Judea, you know Jerusalem during the time of Christ, and even a guy by the name of Mara Bar Sarah who referred to Jesus as the Wise King. It's from them that we know that Jesus was born, was a real man, was supposedly born of a virgin, that he was executed by the Romans through crucifixion, that he died, and that he lived on after that somehow, and his disciples were willing to die for him. That's from external Pagan writings. Talk about accurate!

So, when we take a look at the Bible, the Bible is reliable, but that then takes us back to the start, creation. And that's what I was trying to say last week, evolution doesn't work. Or as Twain would say, "it ain't so!" It's why when I was in high school, I was taught the world was a billion years old, and here two weeks ago a new study, no, it's 36 billion years old. This is the people doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas, because the old ideas didn't work. Evolution couldn't have taken place in a billion years, much less 4.5 billion, so they need 36 billion. Whereas creation requires very little time, 6 days. And if we take a look at the Bible which is reliable, it would put the date of the earth, or age of the earth somewhere between 6 and 8000 years. Because we don't know exactly the number of years of some of those patriarchs. It's thousands of years old, not billions. But Pastor scientists say... Yes, and please, please, please, please, embrace the science. Because if you take a look at the science, ask people how did they know the world is so old, and they'll say, 'well you know the radioactive decay stuff, those dating

methods.' Did you know that those dating methods all of them rely on entropy? Which is the continual breakdown of stuff, which by the way evolution says it goes the opposite direction. That is against the second law of thermodynamics. But when it breaks down, it releases helium. Uranium decays it turns into lead, it loses electrons and what all through helium atoms being given off. If the world was 36 billion years old, we would have an atmosphere that's saturated with helium. But we don't. There's enough helium for about, oh, 6 to 10,000 years of radioactive decay. Please remember that when God created the world he created all the elements that are you know found in this table of elements in science. And I'm sure there was some helium in the atmosphere to begin with. So if we were to assume that there was no active helium in the atmosphere, radioactive decay would account for about 6 to 10,000 years worth. The amount in in the atmosphere today.

When we come to that carbon dating, oh you know carbon dating, carbon dating has dated the dinosaurs are 20 million years old. Kno it has not. Carbon, carbon 12 dating, or carbon 14 which breaks down to carbon 12 has a half-life of 5760 years. You can't date anything past like 20,000 years with it. And again, there's a problem. It assumes that you know how much you started with. When you put that factor in, that you know things would have some carbon 14, and some carbon 12 in them. We all do right now where we have carbon 12 in us. Carbon 14 breaks down to carbon 12, you're never going to get anything over about 10,000 years old using carbon 14 dating. With all of those dating methods, there's this huge problem. You don't know what you started with. You have to make an assumption. That's science starting to shine on the evolutionary mindset.

And speaking of shining, did you know that the sun is shrinking? Again, the second law of thermodynamics, entropy, everything is breaking down. As it gives off energy it shrinks. It shrinks at the rate of approximately 3 feet in diameter per hour. This per the Greenwich, royal Greenwich observatory by the way is highly esteemed that's the observatory that determines all the time for the world, but the US naval observatory backs them up and yeah, hey, go Navy!

When we take a look at that, work it backwards. About 20 million years ago, the sun would have been touching the earth, no life would have existed. Impossible! Science says it doesn't work. Embrace the fossil record. What? 'Pastor its the fossil record that shows us all those transition fossils!' To which I say, "name one." They're not there. When we look at the fossil record, it is phenomenal. The same families exist today that existed back when the fossils were made. Which, by the way, they were made during the flood. I could do a whole thing on that too. But, dogs were dogs, cats were cats, mice were mice, bats were bats, birds were birds. Anything in between is missing; it's the missing link, and why? Because there are no transition

fossils. There can't be because when God created life, He created it irreducibly complex. Whether you look at a human, or you look at an amoeba, a single celled organism. Try making it simpler, which is what evolution contends, it was simpler at one time. Try making it simpler and you will see you will kill it. We are irreducibly complex.

I could go on and on how much deposition sediment has the Mississippi River put into the Gulf of Mexico? Well working that backwards, we know how much goes in approximately each year enough for about four thousand to 4500 years, putting it right at the time of the flood. Nickel concentration in the ocean, where does the nickel come from? It comes from meteorites. We know approximately how many meteorites hit the ocean each year. We know how much nickel goes into the ocean each year. How much is there? Enough for about 6 to 10,000 years of that. When we drill down for getting oil, I know we have to stop because of climate change, but when we do drill down the oil comes out under pressure. Why? Because it was done during the flood and that pressure from all of that water is still there. It hasn't dissipated. If the world was a million years old, all of the pressure would be gone. I could go on and on and on. The reality is this, back to Twain, "what scares me is that what they believe, they say. And and it's being taught as truth.

Sola Scriptura, creation. It's where God starts the gospel message. Paul recognized that, he picked it up, and he applied it to the unknown god. I think we would do well to start right there too. Because it gives relevance to Christianity. It gives relevance Jesus. It explains the need for Savior. God created. God loves His creation. In His creation there are some bad children. They behaved poorly. So, God sent His Son. His Son saved them. And if you trust Him, He'll take you home. That is the Acts 17 block. Start with God's Word. Start gently and respectfully. And start commending them for being religious and looking for truth. But then give the truth.

In our Savior's Name, Amen.