

At Eye Level With the City

Acts 17:24-29

Introduction

There is no question: Our city Berlin is far from God. What is important to us Christians is unimportant to the city. What is important to the city is at best unimportant, at worst an abomination. That Christians stand out like exotic birds in such a city is normal.

We saw that in the last sermon too: How the **otherness of faith** is good – and opens the stage for the gospel.

But how do you proceed? The Bible itself is no longer common knowledge. Verses from the Bible are not present in everyday language, and the worldview of the Bible stands so contrary to the trend that one could imagine nothing with it.

So how do I reach such people? Where do I start?

Paul shows us this in Athens: He meets people **at eye level**. In this text we see three components of truth that help you encounter your counterpart on their level.

1. You are tiny before God

"The God who made the world and everything in it ..." (v. 24)

Paul begins to reveal the unknown God. He puts him in the light – and paints his greatness before the Athenians' eyes. He starts where the Bible starts:

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

This God is **Creator**. He created the universe – everything in it. He is not part of the pantheon, but the origin of everything.

And: He is **Lord of heaven and earth**. He is **Kyrios** – the Supreme One, the Ruler, the Sovereign. As Creator he is simultaneously **originator and owner**. The world and everything in it belongs to him. He is Lord over all – he reigns!

Berlin, with all its culture, politics and science, must understand: **God is greater**. Our kingdoms are only sandcastles on his infinite beach.

He does not dwell in temples made with hands. Even Solomon knew:

"The heavens and the highest heavens cannot contain you." (2 Chronicles 6:18)

God is too great to be limited – and he **needs nothing**.

"He is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything." (v. 25)

He is perfect. He has everything in himself that he needs. He is fullness itself – an ocean that needs no more water. And yet he is not a distant God.

"Since he himself gives all life and breath and everything." (v. 25)

He is the life-giver. All life – from the smallest cell to humans – is created by him and dependent on him.

Berlin has nothing that could impress God. Yet this God **gives** – life, breath, everything. What a God!

2. You are searching for God

"And he made from one man every human being ... so that they would seek God." (vv. 26-27)

Paul draws the arc from Creator to creature. Man is not autonomous, not independent. He is **made by God** – and **created toward him**.

From Adam God made every nation. He determined their times and boundaries, so that they would seek God.

The purpose of man is **to seek God**, the **true God** of the Bible. But many grope in the dark. They sense a longing, a desire, but they satisfy it with substitute gods: Self-realization, relationships, success, freedom.

Paul says:

"That they might perhaps grope for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." (v. 27)

He is not far! He is within tangible reach – visible in creation, audible in people's longings.

The city must understand this: God is not far. He is near – but man searches in the wrong places.

3. You are dependent on God

"For in him we live and move and have our being." (v. 28)

Here Paul shows that all being depends on the Creator:

1. **In him we live** – God gives life.
2. **In him we move** – every action stands under his control.

3. **In him we are** – our entire existence is grounded in him.

Even the Greek poets confirm it:

"For we are indeed his offspring."

Paul uses their own words to show them the truth: Our origin lies in God himself. We are his offspring – his creatures.

"Since we are God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone." (v. 29)

If we come from God, he cannot be something material or made by human hands. The divine is incomparable.

Look at yourself: Your abilities, your intelligence, your consciousness – they point to something higher.

Man is more than matter. He is created to reflect God, to live dependent on him and to find his fulfillment in him.

Conclusion

If you want to show God to a secular city, then you must **start from zero**. You may assume nothing.

Start where Paul began:

- **God is greater** than any human institution.
- **Man is created searching** for him.
- **Our existence depends** entirely on him.

Only in this way will the city recognize the truth – and the God who created everything.