

Sermon Outline

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY (ACTS 17:26-27)

I. Holy Storytelling

II. Paul Testifies for Christ at the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-24)

- A. The purpose of Acts is to show that the Lord Jesus had sent his Holy Spirit to empower his Church to preach the Gospel.
- B. Acts 17 represents an instance of the outward spread of the Gospel.
- C. The Areopagus (“Hill of Ares”) was where the council of Athens met.
- D. Paul’s address to the council is significant for two reasons.
 - 1. It was a fulfillment of the Lord’s plans for Paul to take the Gospel “before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15).
 - 2. It is an example of the apostle Paul bringing the True Story of God to the rulers of Athens.
- E. To begin, Paul points out the Athenian altars “To an unknown god” (17:22-23).
- F. Paul makes the connection between the unknown god and the true God of all (17:23-25).

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What was the work of the council at the Areopagus? (2) Why is Paul’s address to the council at the Areopagus significant? (3) How does Paul introduce God to the council?

III. The Lord God Made Every Nation (Acts 17:26)

- A. The key idea of verse 26 is this: *The Lord God who made the world and everything in it also made every nation of the human race.*
- B. With a single word, the apostle Paul has done two things.

1. He has destroyed any notion of race or nationhood that has no room for the God of Israel.
 2. He has replaced the false stories with the truth: The Lord God is the One who made the nations.
—YHWH God is not only the beginning of the story of Israel. He is also the beginning of the stories of all the other nations of the world, whether of ancient Greece or modern Singapore.
- C. There are other truths that Paul shows us in verse 26.
1. He shows us *how* God made the nations: “And he made *from one man* every nation...”
 2. He shows us *why* God made the nations: “And he made from one man every nation of mankind *to live on all the face of the earth...*” (see Gen 1:28)
 3. He shows us *how* God has enabled the human race to fill the earth: “...*having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.*”

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What is the main truth of verse 26? (2) How did God make the nations? (3) Why did God make the nations? (4) How did God enable the human race to fill the earth?

IV. Singapore Is the Creation of the Lord YHWH

- A. So what does this mean for the Singapore Story today?
1. We cannot ultimately read the Singapore Story as the product of human strength.
 2. We must place our Singapore Story into Acts 17:26 and read it as part of the Story of God.
- B. This is a truth that we have we have to proclaim time and time again because there is an absence of the Divine in the secular version of the Singaporean Story.
—Our patriotic texts emphasize the hard work of Singaporeans as the origin or sustaining force of the country.
- C. It’s not wrong to celebrate our accomplishments as a nation (cf. Rom 15:17).
- D. But when no mention is made whatsoever of God in our national discourses, a major part of our story is missing.

—*We are practically weaving a national creation story that has left God out of the picture and put us—our hard work, our intelligence, our skills, and our teamwork—at the center of our universe.*

- E. When this happens, our nation’s soul will be formed in ugly ways.
—If man alone made Singapore, then Singapore exists for Singapore alone.
- F. What then is the right story? In a nutshell: *God made Singapore for his purposes.*

***Questions for reflection:** (1) What does Acts 17:26 mean for the Singapore Story? How may we not tell the Singapore Story? (2) What are the consequences of telling (and re-telling) only a God-less version of the Singapore Story? (3) What is the real Singapore Story in a nutshell?

V. Why God Set the Nations in Their Boundaries (Acts 17:27)

- A. What is Singapore’s deeper purpose according to God?
- B. Based on the secular version of the Singapore Story, Singapore’s main purpose is to survive—to “Stand Up for Singapore.”
—Survival and our prosperity are the sacred cows of our country.
- C. But God does not want us to be seek only survival and wealth.
- D. God created the nations and set them in their boundaries “that they should seek God...”
- E. Therefore, God made Singapore so that Singaporeans will have a place from which they can pursue him!
- F. “[F]eel their way toward him and find him” assumes that people are blind to God.
- G. God holds out the hope that he will be found by those who truly seek him: “Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.”
- H. It is simply false that Singapore has no purpose other than to feed itself. God has given our nation a purpose—to be a place where people can seek the Lord.

***Questions for reflection:** What is Singapore’s deeper purpose according to God?

VI. Singapore—A Home for God-Seekers

God wants Singaporean Christians to cherish and teach the Singapore Story as he has revealed it. God made Singapore and intends for it to be a safe place where his Word can be freely taught, where his Kingdom can be nourished, where people can seek and find his eternal peace. We Singaporean Christians need to cooperate with God on this. To do so, our Father requires two things from us. First, he wants us to continue challenging the secular Singapore Story and teach others the true God-given story of this nation. Second, he wants us to continue seeking first his Kingdom—for that is why Singapore exists.

- A. We continue challenging the secular Singapore Story and teach others the true God-given purpose of this nation.
 - 1. If the secular story is all that people hear, then we can only expect that our country will remain heavily and deeply secular.
—People will live for nothing higher than themselves.
 - 2. All our social ills can be traced to one common root: People think that this land is all there is.
 - 3. We challenge the Singapore Story by...
 - 1. Teaching the true Story of God—creation, fall, and our redemption in Christ—to those God entrusts to us.
 - 2. Thanking God for Singapore and praying for our country.

- B. We continue to seek first the Kingdom of God.
 - 1. We are misusing God’s gift of land if we do not pursue him.
 - 2. We continue with what we have been doing—worshiping God, teaching his Word to believers and non-believers alike.
 - 3. We mix our religion into politics: We make the preservation of religious freedom a matter of national importance!

***Questions for reflection:** (1) How do we challenge the secular Singapore Story and teach the true God-given purpose of this nation? (2) How do we continue seeking first the Kingdom of God? (3) “We make the preservation of religious freedom a matter of national importance!” What political issues or matters do you need to read up about in order to be educated enough to vote with God’s plans for the nation in mind? What political issues do you think will affect religious freedom here? (4) Can you commit to pray for your country regularly?