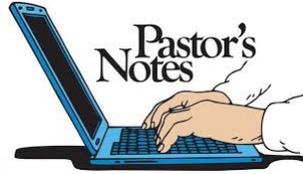


**JANUARY  
2020**

GRACE NOTES  
YOUR ACCESS TO  
GRACE CHURCH  
NEWS & EVENTS



Pastor's Greece Trip



**CHURCH  
NEWS**

# GRACE NOTES

## Pastor's Note:

Until I went to Greece, I had not been a huge fan of Paul's letters in the New Testament. I could understand his passion and message, but his theology and thoughts, mission and ministry were like puzzle pieces spread out here and there in his several letters.

But my travel to Greece in October 2019 changed everything. Visiting archeological sites and seeing ancient relics opened my eyes and ignited my curiosity about early Christianity in Greece. Since then, I have been motivated to eagerly learn about Paul's time and world.

For the next couple of months, therefore, I am going to write essays on Paul and Greek cities. These essays are my attempt to answer some questions that came to my mind during my trip. In them, I will integrate historical background, biblical references, and scholarly research outcome into my personal reflections. It is my hope that it will be a learning opportunity for you and me. Our first destination is Athens.

### **Paul & Athens**

When you get to the city of Athens, you can see one striking monument from every place and angle of the city. It is the Parthenon on the Acropolis hill at the center of the city. This temple was built between 447 BCE and 438 BCE by the order of the statesman Pericles.

Pericles commissioned the renowned sculptor Pheidias to design and construct the largest Doric-style temple of its time. This temple came about thanks to a perfect storm of two brilliant minds: the ambitious visionary politician Pericles and the genius sculptor Pheidias and his artistic excellence.



It was in the morning when my colleague and I climbed up hundred stairs to Acropolis hill. The path to the Parthenon was packed with tourists from all over the world and at the top of the hill we realized why.

The 45 foot tall temple on a 23,000-square foot base was magnificent, grandiose and breathtaking. It was absolutely beautiful. Wow!

I stared wide-mouthed in astonishment and wonder. How could the ancient people in 500 BCE construct such a masterpiece on the top of the hill; how could it exist there more than 2500 years? Overwhelmed by its grandiosity, thousands of people could not but admire the culmination of ancient Greek culture.

Walking around the temple and overlooking the whole city, I enjoyed the beauty of the Parthenon as well as of the ancient city. At that moment, all of a sudden one question came into my mind: what is the relation of Athens with Christianity? What does the

bible actually speak about Athens? Why does the New Testament not include any of Paul's letters to Athens?

It is unclear when Paul visited Athens. According to scholars who work mainly with Pauline Chronology, Paul seemed to have visited Athens only one time on his second missionary Journey, sometime between 49 and 52 CE.

He arrived in Athens by sea from Macedonia, presumably arriving at the Piraeus, the main harbor outside of the city. Paul's first impression of Athens was negative. "He was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols." (Acts 17: 16)

His judgment was right. The city was dominated by the Acropolis, which contained a number of sanctuaries. The main temple, Athena, was the patron of the city, the goddess of wisdom, warfare and courage. This whole city was surrounded by many colossal statues of the gods and people worshipped them.

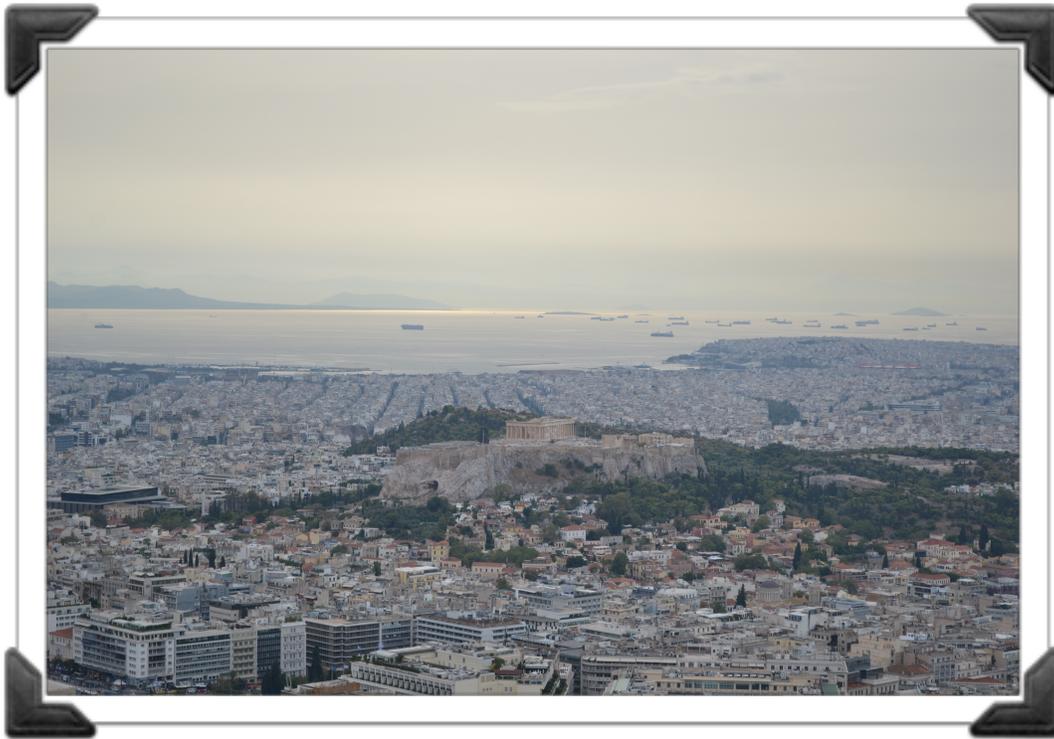
When Paul preached the good news about Jesus to the Epicurean and stoic philosophers at the Areopagus, the historic courts of the city, people mocked him: "What is this guy trying to say?" "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." "You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears." (Acts 17:18 ~20)

In spite of Paul's passionate preaching in the marketplace (Agora) and in the Areopagus, his mission was not successful. Although some wanted to hear again about the resurrection of the dead and "became followers of Paul" (Acts 17:32-33), some of them sneered at his message.

There is no record of how long Paul stayed in Athens. It is certain that he never came back to Athens and never founded any churches in the city of the goddess of wisdom. No letters or writings to Christians in Athens were left behind. It is sad and frustrating.

Contrary to Athens, however, Paul never visited Rome. The early Christians in Rome were persecuted by the notorious Roman Emperors, particularly Claudius (41~54 CE) and Nero (54~68 CE), and many survivors left the capital city of the Great Roman Empire. Nevertheless, Paul sent to Christians in Rome a long theological, pastoral letter, "Romans," which was included in the New Testament as Canon. In 57 CE, he was arrested in Jerusalem and sent to Rome and martyred there in 64.

What an irony of history! In spite of Paul's visit and preaching in Athens, this city has never been the center of Christendom. Rather, it has been the hub of tourists and mostly pagan archeologists and historians for more than 2700 years, while Rome has become the holy center of Christianity.



During our three-day stay in Athens, my eyes, nose and stomach were very content with good food and wine (at a surprisingly decent price!). Every street was filled with fantastic restaurants and the smells of grilling meat and fish enticed our noses everyday and everywhere. Live guitar music and overflowing energy created an exotic, attractive atmosphere and multiplied tourists' amusement in such a fascinating Mediterranean city.

But. . . strangely. . . I felt hungry- a different kind of hunger. The hunger for spiritual energy, spiritual moments, spiritual experiences! I knew I was ready to leave this big city. I felt I could not wait to get to my next destination, Corinth.

Pastor *Kyu*

## JANUARY PRAYER

Generous God, for all that sustains us; air to breath, warmth and light,  
 food to eat, water to drink, we offer our thanks and praise.  
 For spiritual gifts that bind us together; one people, one body empowered for  
 service we offer our hands and voices.  
 For the Good News of the Gospel; healing and wholeness freedom and  
 justice we offer our hearts in service. Amen

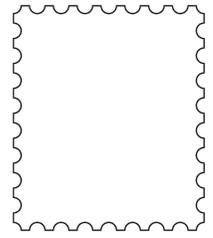
JANUARY 1, 2020



# Grace

United Methodist Church  
36 Central Street  
St. Johnsbury, VT 05819  
[www.stjgracechurch.org](http://www.stjgracechurch.org)

GRACE NOTES



Join us for Worship — Sunday at 10:30 am





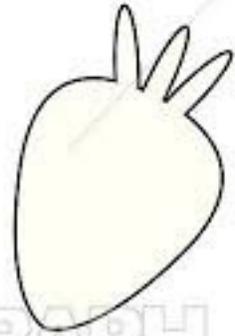
### Lord's Prayer Maze

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
Thy kingdom come.  
Thy will be done...



### Math Game Count and draw

- 4+2 =  S
- 5+7 =  E
- 11-6 =  A
- 9-7 =  T
- 1+3 =  R
- 6+9 =  W
- 7-4 =  Y
- 6+3 =  B



6	2	4	5	15	9	12	4	4	3

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## FISHERS of MEN

And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." **Mark 1:17**

© Crafting The Word Of God





JANUARY 7 — 12:45PM St. Johnsbury Women's Club

JANUARY 15 — 1:00PM TBI

JANUARY 16 — 2:00PM Clergy Cluster Gathering at Grace

- \* **Psalm Readings** are still going on before service on Sundays. We meet in the Fellowship Hall at 10:00 A.M. Everyone is invited to attend. See you there!
  
- \* "Thursdays" the **Pumpkin Hill Singers** will be practicing at Grace from 6-7:30pm.
  
- \* Pastor will be on Vacation January 20-February 7.
  
- \* **A Few Good Men** at the Wright's House will begin again on February 13 at 11:30 AM.