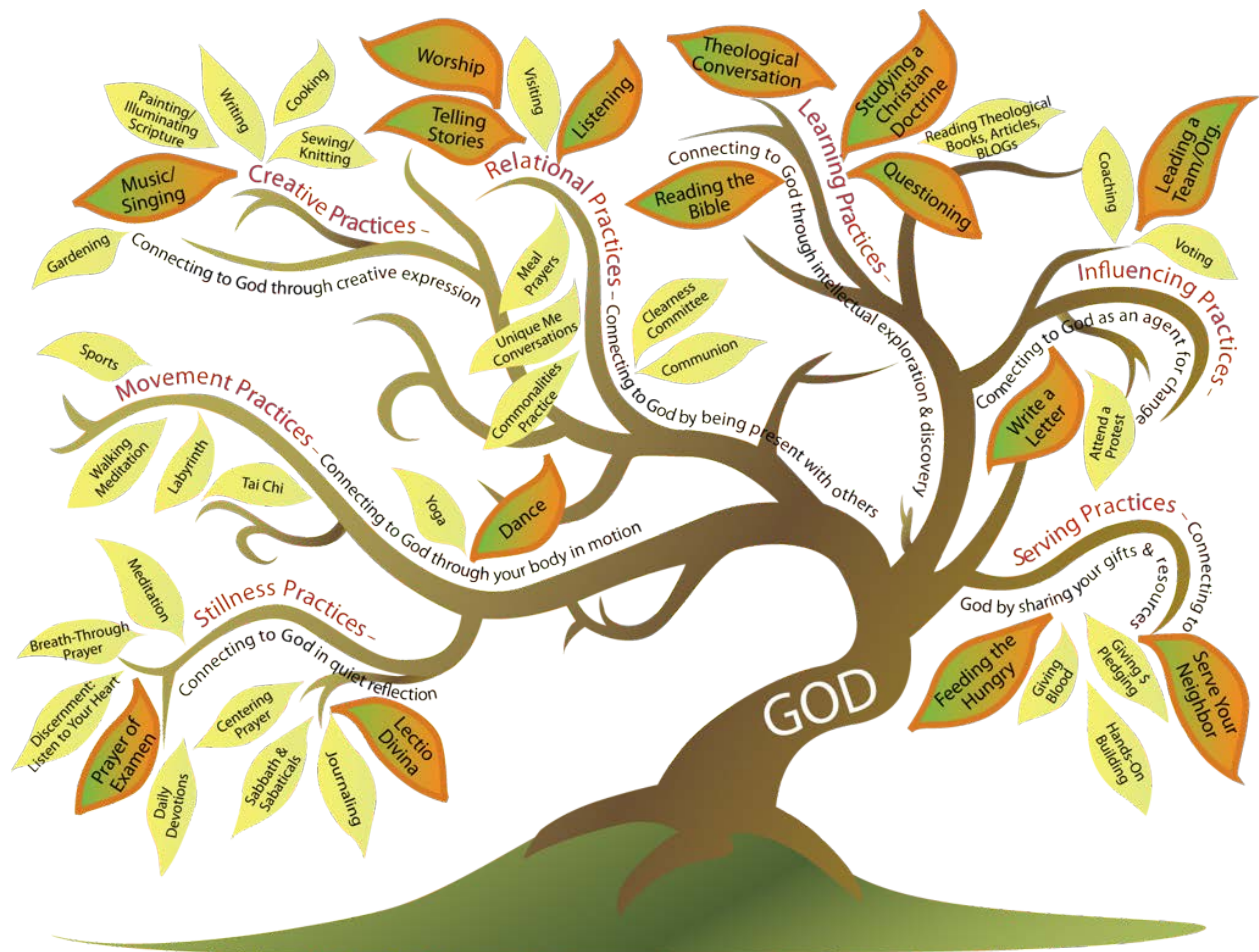


Pastor Greg Briggs, Interim Pastor
Sunday, April 29, 2018

1. Prayer and Introduction
 - a. “May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, our rock and redeemer.” Amen. (Psalm 19:14)
 - b. “Many paths and many ways to see the one truth”
2. I was saved by Hinduism
 - a. My story back to Xity thru hinduism \ interfaith
 - b. Multiple ways to reach God.
 - i. Not just the one I was told existed in church
 - ii. Yoga is not just about movement, but a way, or path, to the divine
 - iii. Yoga –to yoke – to unite the human with the divine, or to concentrate
 - iv. Or – concentration, focus
 - c. I was practicing jnana yoga – the path of knowledge
 - d. Later, found the same truth in Christianity
 - i. **12 Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. 13 We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink. 14 Certainly the body isn’t one part but many. 15 If the foot says, “I’m not part of the body because I’m not a hand,” does that mean it’s not part of the body? – 1 Corinthians 12:12-15**
3. Paul, Athens, and the Unknown God
 - a. New setting, Athens – elite cultural center of the Roman Empire – “spend their time doing nothing but talking about or listening to the newest thing”
 - i. Like the capitol in the Hunger Games, implied to be idle and need of entertainment
 - b. Many temple, altars, idols to Gods – we still use the words of these philosophies today
 - i. Epicurean – like we think of someone who enjoys food – philosophy focused on peace, pleasure, and the avoidance of pain
 - ii. Stoic – logic, divine reason ‘logos’ self-discipline and control
 - c. Paul wasn’t used to their style of discussion or debate – they were struggling to understand him, and he was taken aback by all their idols
 - i. Called him an amateur – “seed picker” someone that gets bits of knowledge from here and there and uses them to sound smart
 - ii. Thought he was talking about multiple gods, Jesus, and a god named resurrection.
4. Many Practices
 - a. Look at the bulletin cover picture. Take a moment, Where do you find yourself? Circle those places
 - i. Stillness Practices
 - ii. Movement Practices
 - iii. Creative Practices
 - iv. Relational Practices
 - v. Learning Practices
 - vi. Influencing Practices

- vii. Serving Practices
 - b. What practices do you find in this church? Put a box around those
 - c. How do they line up? Do they, should they, be identical?
 - i. Can you see, even in the same spaces, like music, or worship, there's a great diversity of styles and preferences?
 - ii. No one church can be an ideal fit for all
 - d. Any practices that were missed? Any branches?
 - i. Focused on individual, Very little about communal practices esp. the "Influencing Practices"
 - 1. Covenantal relationship
 - 2. Finding a teacher,
 - 3. Relationship with authorities and powers
5. Paul Bringing a New Perspective to the Greeks
- a. This has been a lot of talk about different ways to understand God, but I don't want to overlook what Paul had to say about God to the Athenians, and to us.
 - b. Paul "brought Jesus" to Athens by using language and perspectives that they would understand.
 - i. The unknown god
 - 1. A convenient entry point in their pantheon, but also making the point that the faith of Jesus Christ is quite different from Greek philosophies and religion
 - c. Love of God, sacrifice of Jesus, healing
 - i. God needs nothing from humans, but gives.
 - ii. "We are God's offspring" a Greek phrase
 - iii. Neither stoic nor pleasure seeking
 - d. They called Paul a "seed picker" but here, he's functioning like a weaver, taking disparate thoughts and weaving them into one
 - e. Following Jesus needs to be more than just one way – but like being one body in Christ, the different parts must work together
6. The challenge of today's society
- a. Too often, western American culture treats faith ideas like they are seeds, or a smorgasbord, to pick what you want, leave the rest.
 - b. Culturally, many of us claim to be Christian, but in practice, function more like epicureans – choosing what makes us feel good, minimizes our pain, and maximizes our pleasure
 - c. Some like to blame multiculturalism for this trend. I, however, look at this as the oldest of temptations, selfishness
 - i. Epicureanism in a new form.
 - d. Though I'm not a fan of judgment language, Paul reminds us that there will be a time where we are judged, where God will ask us what we have done with our one and precious life.
 - e. Don't be a "seed picker" but have a center, a core
 - i. For me, I realized the faith language I use personally is Christian
 - ii. More importantly, my understanding of God's interaction with the world is best personified in Jesus.
7. Seeing God in all, without appropriating or exploiting other's faith
- a. Yoga, in the western US sense, is a commodification of a faith, vs. the faith itself.
 - i. Sells yoga mats, videos, exercise classes, etc.

- b. “Christian” bookstores, etc., are too often the same way. Branding, vs. faith
 - c. 21 **“Not everybody who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will get into the kingdom of heaven. Only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter. 22 On the Judgment Day, many people will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name and expel demons in your name and do lots of miracles in your name?’ 23 Then I’ll tell them, ‘I’ve never known you. Get away from me, you people who do wrong.’ - Matthew 7:21-23**
 - d. How can one tell the difference between honest expression and commodification?
 - i. I ask myself, how much does this and how much am I giving back to the faith, vs. how much is it just about making me feel good?
 - e. Can everything be a practice? Yes! – look at the bulletin picture again
 - i. Sports – Tebow Xity vs. Kapernick Xity
 - 1. Disconnect – making the goal of sports the goal of your faith – winning, defeating enemies
 - 2. Connection – expressing the goals of your faith through your actions
 - a. Teen football players protecting students from bullying, vs. being bullies
 - ii. Sex ed
 - 1. About how you show respect and love with those you are attracted to, and no longer attracted to
 - a. How you have self-respect – vs. selfish behaviors
 - b. Care for others as you care for yourself
 - f. “It is bad when one thing becomes two. One should not look for anything else in the Way of the Samurai. It is the same for anything that is called a Way. If one understands things in this manner, [they] should be able to hear about all ways and be more and more in accord with their own.” - Yamamoto Tsunetomo: Hagakure.1716.
8. Conclusion – God in Athens
- a. Many ways to connect to the divine
 - b. Many faiths express different aspect of the divine
 - c. Yet, one needs a core to build one’s faith on, and a core to be responsible to



16 While Paul waited for them in Athens, he was deeply distressed to find that the city was flooded with idols. 17 He began to interact with the Jews and Gentile God-worshippers in the synagogue. He also addressed whoever happened to be in the marketplace each day. 18 Certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers engaged him in discussion too. Some said, “What an amateur! What’s he trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods.” (They said this because he was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection.) 19 They took him into custody and brought him to the council on Mars Hill. “What is this new teaching? Can we learn what you are talking about? 20 You’ve told us some strange things and we want to know what they mean.” (21 They said this because all Athenians as well as the foreigners who live in Athens used to spend their time doing nothing but talking about or listening to the newest thing.)

22 Paul stood up in the middle of the council on Mars Hill and said, “People of Athens, I see that you are very religious in every way. 23 As I was walking through town and carefully observing your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘To an unknown God.’ What you worship as unknown, I now proclaim to you. 24 God, who made the world and everything in it, is Lord of heaven and earth. He doesn’t live in temples made with human hands. 25 Nor is God served by human hands, as though he needed something, since he is the one who gives life, breath, and everything else. 26 From one person God created every human nation to live on the whole earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God made the nations so they would seek him, perhaps even reach out to him and find him. In fact, God isn’t far away from any of us. 28 In God we live, move, and exist. As some of your own poets said, ‘We are his offspring.’

29 “Therefore, as God’s offspring, we have no need to imagine that the divine being is like a gold, silver, or stone image made by human skill and thought. 30 God overlooks ignorance of these things in times past, but now directs everyone everywhere to change their hearts and lives. 31 This is because God has set a day when he intends to judge the world justly by a man he has appointed. God has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”