

Acts 17:22-31
John 14:15-21

HIS STEADFAST LOVE

God is our daily bread, the bread of Life;
God is our faithful, immoveable Rock;
and we are blessed every single day with God's steadfast love.

What does steadfast mean?

Unwavering, unfaltering, consistent and committed.

Isn't it amazingly wonderful that we have such awesome care
from the Creator of the universe who stands firm in loving us?

I have to admit that I have for many, many years loved this passage
from Acts, where Paul stood at an important city council
speakers' platform,
proclaiming to the leaders of Athens how he has walked
around their city, noticing the evidence of how very religious they are,
including his blessed discovery of an altar dedicated
"To an unknown god."

I think they probably created that to hedge their bets,
just in case the gods they normally worshipped weren't strong enough,
or even real.

But Paul pounced on the opportunity to tell them
about the true unknown God, the Creator and Lord of all.

Paul points out that this God, whom they do not yet know,
equipped humans with a sort of homing device,
an innate need to search for and find him.

And that he is always nearby, ready to be found,
ready to bless people.

Paul makes sure that the people understand this one and only true God
cannot be an idol fashioned by human hands,
and that this true God is now calling people to repent
for their unrighteous acts and thoughts.

Judgment is coming, he says, and will be brought to all
by the very special man God raised from the dead.

Do the people of Athens know about Jesus of Nazareth?

They did not, despite being well educated and cultured,
but Paul makes sure they will.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “Look for yourself,
and you will find in the long run only hatred, loneliness, despair,
rage, ruin, and decay.

But look for Christ and you will find Him,
and with Him everything else [good] thrown in.”

In our passage from John, Jesus reminds the people,
“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”

This is very demanding of people who had spent most of their lives
making their own way as best they could.

And Jesus also knows that this will become even more
challenging for them when he leaves them behind
to ascend to heaven.

So he makes a new promise to his people:

“I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,
to be with you forever.”

Another Advocate?

Yes, because their advocate Jesus is leaving them.

And this new Advocate will be the “Spirit of truth”, God’s Holy Spirit, whom the people know already but whom the people of the world in general do not know and will not recognize because they don’t yet know God or Jesus.

This promise is both simple and complicated!

At that time, they will recognize that Jesus and the Father are one, and while Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in him, he will also be physically distant from the people, but they will recognize his holy presence among them.

Jesus says, “Those who keep my commandments are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by the Father...” and he goes on to say that he will always love them, and through his loving, spiritual presence he will reveal himself to them.

C.S. Lewis wrote, “The more we let God take us over, the more truly ourselves we become—because He made us.

He invented all the different people that you and I were intended to be... It is when I turn to Christ, when I give up myself to His personality, that I first begin to have a real personality of my own.”

God’s love is steadfast, unchanging, faithful and deeply committed.

We pray:

Wherever we are, Lord,

We know we are together, united in faithful prayer.

We thank you, we glorify you, we worship you,

and we count on you, especially during these devastating times,
to bless us with continuing faith and health.

You are our Rock and our Redeemer.

You sustain us with your never-ending love.

In your precious name we pray,

Amen.