
Live to the Lord

Sermon • Rev'd John Shoaf • 10 May 2026

Acts 17:22-31 • John 14:15-21



May the words of my mouth and the thoughts of our hearts give glory to you, O Lord. Amen.

The classic opening to a sermon used to be, “I take my text from ...,” and then the preacher would quote a Bible verse. I don’t usually start that way, but today ... I take my text from Acts 17:28. Paul is speaking to the Athenians, and he says, “For in [God] we live and move and have our being.” Interestingly, according to my Bible, which is the New International Version, that is a quote not from elsewhere in the Bible, as often happens, but from a philosopher from the Greek island of Crete, a man named Epimenides. He wrote a poem in which the line was applied to the god Zeus. There is much that is mythical about Epimenides, but he also may be responsible for the statue Paul comments on, the one “to an unknown God.” Being from Crete, we may doubt his truthfulness; in Paul’s letter to Titus, he says that “Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons” (Titus 1:12), which is a pretty sweeping statement, and actually attributed to Epimenides himself, though it is apparently

supported by other writers at the time. Imagine such a statement being made today!

But in any case Paul applies Epimenides' line to our God, whom we know. That is the point. Our God is knowable, unlike the gods of mythology who were considered to be remote and apart from humans. *In God we live and move and have our being*. This is the great realisation that we all, as Christians, must come to. All we are, and all we do, comes from God. Without God we would have no life, no movement, and no being. Let us break up this statement into smaller parts and take a closer look.

In God we live: certainly we can say that without God, we would not exist, for God created us. This might be applied to the "have our being" part of the line as well. But I think it is about something else. God sustains us, physically, every moment of every day of our lives. Some theologians maintain that we are continually recreated, or that our creation is so dependent on God that we are like light bulbs: as long as the power is on, the light will be on; but when the power goes off, the light immediately disappears. So do we live by God's continued will for us to live, his continued maintaining the spark of life in us.

In addition, Jesus spoke of us living in him, and himself in God, and so we are also in God. He said,

As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me ...so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one. (John 17:21-23)

Being in God means that we are one with God, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. For the true believer, there is no separation. As we live, we are in God.

In God we move: being in God, God is in us. We might think of "movement" as all the things that we do, all the acts we perform from day to day. Do we dedicate every thing we do to the glory of God? It sounds tedious, put that way; but it is more of a mindset than individual acts of dedication. When I think of serving God, I think less of specific actions, such as an act of worship in a church or helping out at a community lunch (that is of course serving God through serving God's people). Serving God is connecting to God as best we can. That means a constant awareness, very much like the continual prayer I often recommend to you. Praying constantly is a way of remaining connected to God, and that is a kind of service, for God wants our attention and our love and our dedication. Regular thanksgiving is part of this too; and don't thanks come naturally, when we realise that we live and move and have our being in God?

I had a somewhat humorous thing happen the other day which involved thanksgiving. Last Sunday I was at Prebbleton for the two services. I like to arrive at All Saints at about 8.15 for the 9 am service. So I left my house at about 8, and I hadn't gone very far — just into the next street — when I thought to myself, “Did I remember to bring my sermon?” I could remember printing it, but not putting it in my book bag. I pulled over and checked, and it wasn't there. So I drove back to the house, and there it was, sitting on the printer. I got back in the car and started on my way again, and as I went, I gave thanks to God for putting the idea in my head about the sermon. I got to All Saints, set up the things that needed setting up, then went in the vestry to put on my robes — and they weren't there. I had left them at St Mary's. Fortunately, I still had 40 minutes until the service, so I went to St Mary's and got them. Along the way, I thought to myself, “Well, God, thank you for reminding me about the sermon — but while you were at it, couldn't you have mentioned the robes too?”

But I still gave thanks, because everything we do depends on God. God smooths our path — and sometimes makes it more rough, according to his will. We give thanks for both.

In God we have our being: As I said earlier, our very existence depends on God. We are created, born, grow old and die by God's grace and will. But more than that, we are akin to God, for he made us in his own image. We are the children of God. In another sense, we have our being in God because ultimately, no one else matters. We love our friends and our families, but God asks us to put him first above all. So our lives should point to God. In the Gospels, Jesus never bragged about his position as Son of God. He never took advantage of it. He didn't take credit for the miracles, or the wisdom of the things he taught and said. He always pointed away from himself, toward God. So should we point to God and look to God for all that our lives are made up of. Again, as Paul said, “If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's” (Romans 14:8).

Let us live to the Lord, from whom come all life and blessings. Amen.