



DATE: May 3, 2020 (4th Sunday of Easter)
SCRIPTURE: Acts 17:1-9
TITLE: Turning the world upside-down

This passage in Acts tells us that Paul had a pattern for how he shared the good news of Jesus Christ with no people in the ancient world. He would first go to the synagogues and teach people from the Scriptures.

He first showed them the nature of the Messiah. Then he told them that the Messiah was Jesus. The fact is, many could not accept that a man that was crucified could possibly be the Messiah. There was a dominant understanding of what the Messiah would look like. The Messiah would have to be a conquering King, one who would restore Israel and the Davidic monarchy. The Messiah would have to free the people from the injustice of the Emperor. The Messiah could not possibly be one who hung from a cross in suffering and shame.

Paul first had to challenge the popular perception of what the Messiah would be before he could even begin to talk about Jesus.

Today, there is a popular perception of Christians. It is not always positive. Many outside the



Church perceive that Christians are judgmental. Some think that Christians are anti-

science. Others think Christians suppress the leadership of women, advocate blind group-think, or strict adherence to a political party.

I think we can learn a lot from Paul. He did not reach new people by simply telling them about Jesus. First he helped them re-imagine what the Christ

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could be. He used the Bible—probably some of the Psalms and prophets—to show that the Christ was not the conquering hero, but the loving servant.

He helped change their perception of the Christ. Then he presented them his encounter with Jesus. We can do the same, by challenging the common perception of Christians. We can show that following Christ does not mean that we are judgmental, anti-science, sexist, homophobic, or any of the things people believe

Christians to be.

We can show them that because we believe in the Bible, we also believe in the love of our neighbor, in compassion for the poor, and in caring for our environment.

Those first Christians were accused of “Turning the world upside down.” They did so by first overturning the perception of what the Christ could be. We can turn the world upside down with our love, and we can overturn what others think a Christian is supposed to be.