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SPEAKER #1 Welcome to the Bethany Hour. We come to you under the auspices of grace from the Bethany Baptist Church Brooklyn New York, Dr. William Augustus Jones, pastor. Bethany is a church totally committed to a gospel of holism. We believe that Jesus Christ speaks to the totality of the human condition. We commend him to everyone as the all-sufficient savior. We urge you to worship him each Lord's Day. Come now and unite with us as we celebrate the goodness of the Lord.

REV. JASPER PEYTON: Our father we are thankful to thee, for bringing us across the threshold of a brand-new year. You've allowed us to assemble ourselves together in this, your house today. And for this our father, we're grateful. For your continuing goodness taught us. We now beseech a deep sense of your holy presence in our midst. We pray oh God, that you might tabernacle with us in this your house as we endeavor to worship thee in spirit and in truth. Bless all the things that shall be said and done and just hold a house of prayer today. Bless every song that shall be sang, every word that shall be spoken. And we pray oh God, that we will endeavor to worship thee as we art. Help us our father to lay aside every weight that does so easily beset us that we might run this race with patience. Bless our passage to come forth to speak out your holy word today. Undergirded with your power, overarching with your might and infuse us with thy spirit. Be with us Lord, throughout this day. Bless us and hear our individual petitions. If thou wilt, for we ask it all in the name of your son, Christ Jesus, our Lord. It is in this precious name that we pray.

(choir sings "God Is Still On The Throne")

REV. DR. WILLIAM AUGUSTUS JONES, JR: Here now the lesson as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 17, beginning with verse 22 and ending with verse 31. "Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch

then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead." Here endeth the lesson. God bless the reading of his eternal word.

(choir sings)

JONES: Kindly turn in the hymnal to the hymn of consecration, selection 234, "Guide Me, Oh Thou Great Jehovah"

(choir and congregation sings "Guide Me, Oh Thou Great Jehovah")

JONES: Today I want us to look together at a passage replete with eschatological or last day meaning. A passage that deals with judgment and also the anthropomorphic. I want to talk about *When God Stopped Winking*. I lift up verses 30 and 31 in the 17th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and here's what those verses say, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; wherever he hath given assurance to all men, in that he raised him from the dead." *When God Stopped Winking*. Once upon a time, it is suggested here, God had a winking eye. The infinite one whose sweep is from everlasting to everlasting, who is always going where he's coming from. Once upon a time God possessed an eye that winked. Now most of us who've been around for a while know something about a wink. There was a time when a winking of the eye was more widespread. In my youthful days, the winking eye was one of the ways of getting the attention of a lovely lass, of letting her know that you had more than a casual interest in her. You remember those days many of you? And if the feeling was mutual, if deep called unto deep, back, and forth. If a certain chemistry manifested itself, she would wink at you in return. And brethren, I hope you remember the feelings that that engendered. Winking eyes, they were part and parcel of the courtship lexicon and here in this text, Paul, God's chief ambassador to the gentiles, suggests that even the eternal God once had a winking eye. Now to be certain, the apostle was using an anthropomorphism. He was using a human category to explain the divine—and he tells us, yes that once upon a time God winked, but not in courting manner not in the sense of closing the eye and opening it back up quickly. You know, Paul says that there was a time of definite ignorance when God winked at the situation and winking at is something of another stripe and that quite different from just a wink. To look at, is to pretend not to see or to overlook. Now the King James translation of the text reads, "the times of this ignorance God winked at." The Revised rendition says, "the times of ignorance God overlooked." God winked at a certain ignorance, and he winked not with the eye of scrutiny but with the eye of judgment. He overlooked ignorance because of ignorance. Lord, help me to plan it out. I say he overlooked ignorance because of ignorance. Now this is the declaration of one of the peak passages of the New Testament. This 17th chapter of the book of Acts, the chat maker from

tarsus, speaking from the middle of the areopagus high up on Mars Hill, tells some Epicureans, some Stoics, and others who have gathered to talk about Jesus and the resurrection. The apostle had been brought to Athens and what images this name conjures up. Athens, citadel of Grecian culture. Athens, cradle of philosophic speculation. Athens, place of poets like Sophocles and Euripides. Athens, seat of the famous university. Athens, intellectual mecca of the world. Athens, where Socrates talked, and Plato wrote. Athens, place of the Parthenon. Now Paul's move upon arrival in Athens is explained by Luke. Listen to the physician as he describes it, "Paul's spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." He debated the Athenian Jews, he argued with the Stoics and the Epicureans of the Stoics caught up in conduct according to nature and their procurements, Curians declaring happiness to be the *summa bonum*, the highest good—and out there in the midst of all that, went on Mars Hill. He placed the ignorance level on Stoicism, Epicureanism, elitism, and ethnocentrism and he talked about ignorance that God used to wink at, and he went on to declare that there came a day when God stopped winking. Now most scholars, biblical scholars that is, have argued that Paul flunked that day. They claimed that he wooed without winning, he preached without persuasion. No converts were registered for the kingdom. I'm made to differ with all who say that Paul flunked for the simple reason that truth never flunks. Truth may seem to flunk. Error on the other hand is essentially a short-term phenomenon, but truth prevails for both time and eternity. You don't weigh truth on the same scales that you weigh error on. Truth needs a different mode of measurement. You don't weigh truth on scales of temporariness and transitoriness. Now Paul did not flunk, he lifted up that day for the ages to see, two poisons that have plagued humankind all across the pathway of our pilgrimage. In the first place, Paul indicted idolatry. He assaulted the bulwarks of false worship. He punctured paganism. He indicted idolatry. "Men of Athens I perceive that in every way you are very religious. For as I passed by and observed the objects of your worship. I saw also an altar with this inscription: to the unknown God." It was obviously an Athenian attempt to cover all bases. Altars of every description dotted the landscape but just in case just in case some deity had not been objectified, they had an altar for whatever and whoever. Religious people, they were exceedingly so. Polytheism held full sway but there was no center and nucleus of being, no singular frame of reference, no ultimate power to whom one could relate. Religion all over the place, but blurred, a hodge podge—a smorgasbord if you please. Mixed up, muddled, disjointed, divided and divisive, idolatry with many names and Paul indicts the idolatry and he does it by instructing them, the God who made the world and everything in it, being hound of heaven and earth does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself giveth to all men life and breath and everything. And then Paul proceeded to do a second thing, he rejected their racism, ethnocentrism. The belief that one's own group is superior to all others has a firm foothold in the Grecian mind. What with all of their celebrated poets and philosophers, their vaunted position in the arts and their military acumen made manifest in the likes of Alexander the Great. The Greek mind hugged the illusion that the Greeks were a breed apart and that's generally the problem with collective success. Notions of superiority are fed even to little children and bigots are unconsciously born and when such a bigot breeding process goes on interrupt uninterrupted century after century it's well not impossible to arrested and destroyed. For racism feeds the ego, racism separates, divides, and categorizes. Racism assigns and defines. Racism rejects and repudiates and recriminates and it does all of these feeling that it has the right to do so. I heard a certain New York preacher declare once in a sermon that we can wipe out racism by the year 2000. Well, you know where 2000 is and I thought to myself when he said it in my hearing some 10 years ago, what naivety, what false optimism—and that preacher went on to urge

the congregation to be truly multi-ethnic. Well, that's a noble posture but I've discovered that the situation can be multi-ethnic and thoroughly racist at the same time. For the elimination of racism cannot possibly come by simply sitting down for lunch together. The roots are too deep—and the roots are essentially religious in nature, and I'll tell you why, racism is essentially a form of idolatry and that's why Paul indicted idolatry and rejected racism in virtually the same breath. Racism implies a certain doctrine of man, and the doctrine of man necessitates a doctrine of God. In a word, racism is theological in its covert essentialism and anthropological in its overt expressions. You've got to deal with this demon both theologically and biologically. That's why Paul ties together the tenets of theology and the basics of biology and shouts aloud to the world to hear, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." One God, one blood. That's the way it was, that's the way it is, that's the way it shall be. Now anybody who can't see this or refuses to acknowledge this, is simply ignorant. I don't know any other way to put it—well, Paul has already put it. Now the word ignorant normally means a lack of knowledge but the root word remember, is the word ignore and to ignore is to disregard or pay no attention to. So then, anybody whether learn it or unlearn it, who is an idolater or a racist is ignorant—either because they don't know or because they do know but disregard the facts—and Paul says that there was a time when such ignorance, the ignorance of idolatry and the ignorance of racism—there was a time when such ignorance elicited a divine wink—and the times of this ignorance God winked at but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. My friends, my soul is made to shiver when I think of all the evil that's been inflicted on innocent lives by ignorance. Especially the ignorance inherent in racism. Now this nation and western civilization in general have an awful record in this regard. The horror stories are known to all but acknowledged by just a few. And the tragedy is heightened by the fact that all of these evils have been committed on this side of winking time. Slavery, segregation, discrimination, lynchings, bombings, and all the expressions of racism have occurred in this land since God stopped winking. There was a time when he winked at such ignorance, but there came a time when he stopped winking—and passed a post-winking time, judgment is hard and harsh. Idolatry is inexcusable, racism is inexcusable, and all practitioners of these evils had better repent because winking time is ended. It ended a long time ago. It ended with the coming of the Lord Christ. It ended with the birth of Bethlehem's babe. It ended when the infinite intersected the finite. It ended when eternity broke in on time when Kairos stepped into Cronos. It ended with the Jesus event. Listen to Paul, "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he ordained, and that man is none other than the son of God." That man is my Lord. Now, I've got to stand in judgment before that man. I've got to give account to that man. Only that man can let me in the gate. Only that man can admit me to the kingdom eternal. That man alone can assign me a seat at the welcome table. Only that man can give me a home in Beulah Land. That man, you know him don't you? Didn't you meet him one day? I'm talking about that man! That man, the pre-existing Christ, the day sprang from on high Moses' bush are burning. That man, Elijah's chariot of fire and Daniel's stone rolling, Ezekiel's wheel in the middle of a wheel. That man, Solomon's rules of sharing, Mary's baby, the sinner's friend, and the believer's trust. That man, my rock, my sword, my shield, the middleman at calvary, the centerpiece of creation, my Lord, my savior, my redeemer. That man! My peace in times of conflict, my comfort in the dying hour and my blessed assurance in the resurrection. That man! I'm glad, mighty glad that I know that man—and only because of that man did God stop winking and start commanding sinners everywhere to repent of their sins. Everybody better get in step with that man. He's the only one who knows thoroughly the root from earth to glory. He's the only one who will walk with you every step of the way. He's the only one who will hold you until the

dawning of redemption's day. I tell you, he's the only one who can rescue the person and care for the dying. Make sure you're in step with that man. That man! That man! Do you know him? That man! Have you tried him? That man! Do you believe his word? Talk about that man, do you trust his grace? That man! Yes! Hallelujah yes! I'm mighty glad I know that man. I'm mighty glad I've met that man. I'm mighty happy to have walked with that man. Yes! Yes! Hallelujah! That man! Leave here today assured of an everlasting relationship with that man. That man! That man! That man who represents the door upon which the universe turns. That man, central on calvary. That man, the only one who could talk to men on opposite sides of the continuum on calvary's cross. That man, he knew what to do with rejection's representative and he knew what to do with redemption's representative. Rejection's representative howled out against him and said derisive things, but redemption's representative looked at that man and said, "sir, I hear you've got a kingdom that you're in route to and I have a simple request. I'm not in company with that man on the other side of the cross, he doesn't know what he's talking about but you're going somewhere and you're getting ready to leave in a little while and all that I ask is that when thou comest into thy kingdom remember me." And that man looked at redemption's representative and said, "you don't have to wait. I'm taking you along for the journey. Yes! Yes, today, this day you shall be with me in paradise." That man can make that kind of assurance without any fear at all of successful contradiction. That man and I love him, oh yes. I really need to quit for your sake, but I love him. I found him to be true blue, never the slightest shadow of turning. When I talked to him this morning, he was the same man that I've been talking to every morning of my consciousness of him. That man, yes! That man. That man! Because of him we have a home in Beulah Land that outshines the sun. God stopped winking, but for the believer he never stopped blessing. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! The doors of the church are open. It may be that there are person's present this day, you have never expressed faith in the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ for the redemption from sin, there may be some here who have never declared "I believe on the son of God," and I want to tell you in the uncertain terms that even though you've never acknowledged him, your need of him remains constant. And if there are person's present who've never expressed their belief in the son of God and his purposes, we urge you to come this morning while you have this chance—and if by chance there are persons living in the city but who have no church home, we invite you to come and unite with people of God here at Bethany. You claim to know him but you're like a robin without a nest, you need somebody to hold your hand. You need people to put their arms around you. You need people of kindred minds who will walk with you, understanding you. So, if either case fits you, I would urge you to come today while we sing this blessed hymn of invitation, "Solid Rock", hymn number 223. "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness," 223. Let us stand and lift it to the glory of God.

(choir and congregation sing "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less" also known as "Solid Rock")

JONES: Who will come? Who will come?