

How Jesus Loves His Bride - Acts 4:32-5:16
Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading

Notes from the Sermon

Whoa. The story of Ananias and Sapphira seems to come out of nowhere. It is wrapped in two sections showing the power, unity, and generosity of the early church in Jerusalem. Then, wedged in between is this crazy story of a couple who gave money to the church and died because of it. That seems a bit, well, whack. Why in the world would God be so harsh with this couple? And if my tithe only comes out to 9 3/4 percent and I in trouble.

To understand the story we have to do what we do every time we approach Scripture, read it both in the immediate context and in the context of the entire story of the Bible. In the immediate context Luke has informed us of both the generosity of the entire church, and specifically of one man, Barnabas. Actually, Barnabas is a nickname that stuck which meant “son of encouragement”, his real name is Joseph. Every church needs this guy, the bridge builder, the positive person who is full of loving optimism and reassurance. One of the things we find in Luke’s writing style is that he will quickly introduce key characters, we are to note their name knowing that the story will come back and tell us more about the ministry of the person. As the story goes forward, Barnabas (he is never called Joe again) becomes one of the key leaders in the Gospel movement and the early church. We will meet him again after this guy named Saul who persecuted believers became one. Rightfully, the Apostles were a bit skeptical and fearful, but Barnabas is the positive guy who connects Saul to the Apostles. Barnabas is then sent from Jerusalem to visit the church in Antioch, where he eventually becomes a pastor, and again gets Saul (A.K.A. the Apostle Paul) involved. Eventually this amazing church in Antioch sends Paul and Barnabas out on a missionary journey taking the Gospel to the unreached peoples in Asia. But here Barnabas is introduced because of his generosity, and as a result he is recognized as a leader in the early church because he is a man of generosity, love for others, and integrity.

The Ananias and Sapphira story comes on the heels of this introduction, and I believe in the shadow of it. They see how Barnabas was honored in the church for his generosity, although he was not seeking recognition. And they see that he gains position in the Jerusalem assembly as a result. So they concoct a scheme that involves selling a piece of property, giving some of the money to care for those with needs yet keeping the rest, yet claiming that their donation represented the entire sale price. They have honor and position on their minds, yet God reveals what they have done, lying not just to the church but to the Holy Spirit, and gets them right there. Crazy, right?! The text helps us with the reason, and the things that are not. God does not judge this couple for failing to give enough, or even for not giving all the proceeds. The land was theirs, seen in Scripture as a gift from God, and when they sold it the money was theirs. They could give what they wished. It was the posture of their gift seeking honor while at the same time lying about what they were giving. So I want you to think for a minute what would have happened if God did not act in this moment, revealing their hearts to Peter and judging them swiftly. The church may have responded much like they did with Barnabas, they could have slidden in to a place of honor and leadership. The outcome could have been disastrous, as the unity and beauty of the church pictured in the previous text could have been absolutely destroyed as wolves found their way into prominence in this early church. So Christ acts swiftly to defend His Bride and defend His glory. The outcome then, is fear in the church and culture, power in their ministry, and the continued spread of the Gospel. Ananias and Sapphira could have sidetracked this mission quickly if they gained the same honor as Barnabas.

And this sort of sudden and quick judgment is consistent with the story of God in the

Scriptures. There are times God acts in a quick, decisive way to defend the holiness and unity of His people and to put His glory, holiness, and power on display. You can look these up, but we have God acting against the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Nadab and Abihu, Achan, and several others. It may seem harsh, but these events happened to remind God's people then and us now that God is a righteous judge, we don't deserve one ounce of His grace, and willful sin in His people is a dangerous thing. The outcome in the story was that the church feared the Lord. Proverbs 1 reminds us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And fear means fear, it is awe at the power and potential of God to act at any time for His purpose and people, but against wickedness among His people and in the world. This fear, like fear of a good daddy, draws us toward Him rather than leaving us running from Him, yet it is a healthy fear of the Lord. And this is a good thing for the Jerusalem church and for ours.

Bible Reading for the Week

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
1 Peter 1	1 Peter 2	1 Peter 3	1 Peter 4	1 Peter 5	2 Peter 1	2 Peter 2

Reading from this past week: Acts 4:32-5:16

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Acts 5:17-42

Family Worship

Song - *God is For Us*

<https://youtu.be/U24r7iHNSJU>

Gospel Project

Unit: A Pattern of Disobedience

Story: God provided for Ruth

Big Picture Question: What is the fair payment for sin?

Answer: The fair payment for sin is death.

Scripture: Ruth 1-4

New City Catechism

Question #19: Is there any way to escape punishment and be brought back into God's favor?

Answer: Yes, God reconciles us to himself by a Redeemer.

Verse: Isaiah 53:10-11

Scripture

Acts 4:32-5:16

- What are some of the activities happening in the early church as told in 4:32-37 and 5:12-16?
- What is so amazing about Barnabas? Do you know the rest of the story with this guy? What are some other things he will do as a leader of the early church?
- Why would God act quickly to judge Ananias and Sapphira? Why is this difficult for us to accept?
- What was the response of the church to this story according to 5:5? What is fear of the Lord and why is this a good thing for the church?

Prayer

*Pray for the holiness and unity of your church.

*Pray for your mom this week, lift her up and ask God to draw her closer to Jesus.