

Multitudes Added to the Lord

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Bible Text: Acts 5:12-16

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The Scripture reading this afternoon is found in the book of Acts, chapter 5, the first 16 verses. Our text is found in verses 12 through 16,

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. 11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. 13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto

Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

That far we read in God's holy inspired word. May God bless that word to our hearts.

The text that we consider this afternoon is Acts 5:12-16. I read those again at this time. Acts 5:12-16,

12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. 13 And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. 14 And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) 15 Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. 16 There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.

Beloved congregation in our Lord Jesus Christ, what if somebody said to you, "It doesn't really matter if I go to church"? How would you respond to that, if somebody said that, "It doesn't matter if I go to church as long as I believe that Jesus Christ is my Savior. Why should I have to go and sit in a sanctuary for two or three hours a week? I can read my Bible at home or I can listen to sermons on the Internet." So how would we respond to that? We have to be sure there are legitimate reasons that people have that they are not able to make it to church because of weakness and poor health but that's not what we're talking about here. We have in our day more and more despising of the church institute. People who still claim to be saved by Jesus Christ, they claim to be Christians but they say, "I don't need the church." Then even if they do attend worship services, there are still those who sit loose to the church; who are on the far outskirts of the camp, as it were, and sit loose to the church and they need to understand, we need to understand that to do that is to sit loose to Jesus Christ.

The text that we consider this afternoon emphasizes the importance of the local manifestation of the body of Christ because when the believers were added to the Lord, they didn't just stay by themselves, they didn't go to their homes and live and go to their workplace day after day and live to themselves, no, they became members of the local church in Jerusalem. They manifested the unity of the body. Of course, those additions to the church didn't just happen spontaneously, the Lord added them to the church and to do that, he used means and the sovereign Lord, the same sovereign Lord who adds his people to the church is also the Lord that will preserve his people. That's our comfort as well. He will take care of the church today too. He adds multitudes to himself and none can snatch them out of his hand.

Let's consider the text under the theme "Multitudes Added to the Lord." Let's note the meaning of that in the first place and then the manner in which they are added and the

comfort that is to us. Believing men and women were "added to the Lord," that's a striking phrase, beloved, because it doesn't just say they were "added to the church" or they "became members of the church" although they did that too. The Holy Spirit inspired the writer of Acts, Luke, inspired him to write that these were "added to the Lord." That means that they were added to the fellowship of the Lord; they were brought into fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ himself. It's striking that word that we use for "church" today probably has its origin in the word "kirk" which goes back to the Greek word "koriakos" which means "belonging to the Lord; those who belong to the Lord." That's the significance of those who belong to the church is that they actually belong to the Lord, Jesus Christ.

These people when they were added to the Lord, didn't go back to their homes and live lives to themselves, thinking, "Well, now I can look forward to heaven," but they joined the local manifestation of the body of Christ. They joined the church. That's practical. That's practical for today because it means that the church is important. The church is not just some human institution, some take it or leave it human social club that we can attend if we like to or we can stay home if we don't like to. The church is made up of those who are added to the Lord. It's more than just a human institution, it's those who have been grafted into the body of Christ, the vine and therefore they partake of the vine. But how do they partake of the vine? It's in connection with the body. It's not living off by ourselves, separately in every corner, it's worshiping the Lord together as a body, hearing his word together as a body. We join the body to worship our God and to build one another up in our most holy faith. And we could say that about our worship services, we could say that about Bible study too. Why do we go to Bible study? It's not just what we can get out of it for ourselves but it's to build the others up. That's what the body exists for, that we might worship God and build one another up in our faith.

One of the amazing things of this text, beloved, is that it points out the multitudes that were added to the church. Multitudes, both of men and women were brought together. Multitudes but into one body. Multitudes of different people: fishermen and tax collectors; rich and poor; born leaders and those who were followers. All kinds of different circumstances, all kinds of personalities and isn't that the way it is in the church today? Sometimes we think that's a negative. We secretly wish everybody was just like ourselves but the church needs all kinds. The church needs all kinds of personalities and inclinations. Jesus Christ uses all the members of the body. Just look at our own congregation and think of how many different personalities we have. Maybe there are some that are easier to get along with; some that are harder to get along with; some that are extroverts; some that are introverts; some that are old; some middle-aged; some that are young; some that are married; some that are single; young children; families with young children; some with middle aged children; some with children that are out of the house. All kinds of circumstances. all kinds of differences, men and women and God takes us all together and joins us into one body.

Multitudes of differences but one body. Even though we can't fully appreciate all the struggles and joys of every member, God still puts us into one body and that's different. That's different than human institutions or organizations. Human institutions, usually they

have some thing, they all have a common interest. Somebody likes to go shooting, they join that shooting club or whatever. They join that but they have that common interest. That's not the church. That's not the church, not a human interest, that is.

The text indicates that as well, the unity of the church in Jerusalem when it says, verse 12, "They were all with one accord in Solomon's porch." They were all with one accord, not that they forced themselves to have the same interest as others; not that they put themselves into the same mold but they had the one common interest, the one that really matters. They all saw themselves as sinners, they ought to have, who had come to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior who covers all of their sins with his precious blood and that one thing in common is what brought them all together that made them part of the body of Christ. That unity is striking, beloved, and I'm sure some of us have experienced that. We travel thousands of miles, sit down with somebody who is a complete stranger, not related to us at all and we find we feel like we know them. We fellowship with them around the word because they are members of the one body. We have more fellowship with them than we have with some members of our own families. That's the unity of the body. They were with one accord. When Jesus Christ regenerated them, when he brought them into living communion with Jesus Christ, what did he do? He brought the members into the local congregation, the Jerusalem congregation of the church. They didn't sit loose to the church. We confess that we are saved by the blood of Christ but, beloved, I believe we all need to learn more of what it means to be part of the body.

We can be so selfish and immerse ourselves in our little corner and our problems and we forget that we are part of the body and maybe in the church we come to church and we fellowship with only a small section of the body and that happens in all churches. Go to the churches in Grand Rapids and Chicago and Iowa, that happens. You have a small group and they fellowship with one another. Then you have another group over here, they fellowship with one another. I'm not saying we may not have some friends that are closer than others, that's natural but do we think of the whole body? To fellowship and think of only this small group is like, "Well, the hands of the body are only going to fellowship with the hands. Because we have so much in common, we're going to fellowship with them." And then children, the eyes fellowship with the eyes. How silly would that be? We all are part of the same body. Though there are younger ones in the body, they can also help the elderly. They can bring joy to the elderly. Families can fellowship with those who are single and singles can seek the good of the whole church. The church in Jerusalem were with one accord, with one accord and that means they set aside their personal interests; they set aside even their personal tensions and they worked together for a common goal.

There are a number of examples of being with one accord. One negative example of being with one accord we find in Acts 7:57. This has to do with Stephen, "They cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord." They had one purpose and that was to get rid of Stephen. But there can also be a positive being of one accord and that was the example of the church in Jerusalem. In Acts 2:46 we read, "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from

house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people." There was a unity, a unity of purpose.

The church is about having a unity of purpose to glorify the Lord God and to serve him also by encouraging one another in the body. Why does God gather us all together in the body? Because he wants us to build one another up, to build one another up in that most holy faith. Is that true of ourselves? Do we dwell with one accord? Do we worship God with one accord and do we see ourselves as united to all the members of the body, even those members that we think of as undesirable? Do we see ourselves as members of the one body? Are we willing to set aside personal differences? It always happens in the church. You have somebody who wants things this way and they think that is the way that will bring most glory to God and there are those who want things another way and what a shame, though they both seek the glory of God, yet because they disagree, they are going to be separate now? Though we have personal differences, though we have differences of opinion, if we're of one accord, we will set aside those differences and say we all want to bring glory to God. We all want the good of the body. That ought to be how it is. That ought to be how it is, that we are united with one accord.

How did the church at Jerusalem become united? Was it that they had a charismatic leader and he was able to draw them together? No, it was the work of the Lord that united them. The Lord Jesus Christ added the church to himself, his members. He shed his blood for them and then he poured his Spirit upon them and by the mighty working of the Spirit, he took the church and joined them into one body. By one Spirit they were baptized into one body. That's what Christ does for the church and having that in common, as we think of ourselves here today, should rise above all the other differences that we have. It should give us a care for the body because this is the body of Jesus Christ. It ought to make us pray for the members and for the body in general.

Multitudes were added to the Lord by the Spirit of the Lord, powerfully working in their hearts. How did God add them to the body? In what manner did God work? Well, especially through the preaching of the Gospel. They joined together in Solomon's porch and they heard the word there. The people heard those people who had long been under bondage, the bondage of sin, they came to the glorious knowledge of Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, and the Lord added them to the body. But here in our text is emphasized the use of signs and wonders. The Lord used in this particular case, signs and wonders to add people to the church. Acts 5:12, "And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people." Signs, we know what a sign is, children, that points to some other truth beside itself; it's a token or a pointer. These signs were pointers that pointed to the fact the apostles were God's servants, were in fact, God's servants. The New Testament church was truly the church of God. And by doing these signs, the apostles gave proof that they were on God's side and that their message was in fact, God's message. Those signs are also called "wonders" because they were out of the ordinary. They made people wonder. They astounded the people by these mighty works.

Miracles of healing. Miracles of healing, many miracles of healing, verse 15, "Inasmuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at

the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them." Not that Peter, of course, had that power in himself but that was God working through Peter and working that sign and wonder to point to his authority behind the word that Peter preached. Verse 16, "There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one." Not just physical diseases but also unclean spirits. They were healed, every one. By these miracles, God was confirming that these apostles were, in fact, messengers of Jesus Christ, preaching his truth. Whenever the apostles did a miracle in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, they were pointing to the fact that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was not in the grave, that he was risen and that he was exalted in heaven and that he was doing this work and therefore, again, the message that the apostles were preaching was the message of God himself. Wonderful signs.

But now the question comes up, beloved, and that's still a question in the church world today: should we expect signs and wonders in the church today? Is the church defective because we don't see signs and wonders? We don't have people brought up to the front here and the pastor lays their hands on them and they are healed? Is the church defective because we don't do that? Well, to answer that we need to understand the purpose of signs and wonders. The wonderful signs that were given to the church were given in that day, were given to the New Testament church in its infancy. Well, what was the purpose? Why did God give those signs? Well, the apostles themselves and the people needed to know that this was of God. There was a huge change in direction, a new dispensation. All the Old Testament sacrifices were going to be done away with. The worship in the temple in Jerusalem was going to be done away with. They needed a sign to tell them, "This is of God. This is of God." The old ceremonial economy was passing away.

Some of you may remember not so long ago when they switched the sign, the traffic signal on 107 Avenue and Mayfield and when they switched the light, the city put signs there warning everybody, "New traffic signal." Well, that's because a change had been made. They wanted everybody to know that there's a new signal. Well, that lasted about three weeks and those signs that advertised a new traffic signal were removed because they were no longer needed. A sign by its very nature is something that is only needed for a period of time. As soon as I see my turn off, I see the sign, once I get off on the turn off, I don't need that sign anymore. A sign by its very nature is a temporary thing.

In a similar way, when God dramatically changed the way the church would operate, the church needed a sign to show the apostles and to show the people that this was God's work but the signs were limited to that period when the change was occurring. As the Old Testament economy was passing away, before the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed, they needed a sign. But once the reality had been established, they don't need the sign anymore and so the sign of healing and other apostolic signs, passed away. They were not necessary after a period. Now to be sure, beloved, God still heals. God can heal sometimes in marvelous ways. Doctors say, "I don't understand this." God can heal that way and he does but he doesn't do it in the church as a sign for the church. We don't need that kind of sign anymore to prove the authority behind the preaching. We have God's word.

Sometimes we think it would be nice to have those kinds of signs. Wouldn't it be powerful if we were able to heal people from all kinds of diseases? But now think of this, beloved: what would be more powerful, the physical healing that is accomplished or the spiritual healing that Jesus Christ works in the hearts of his people? If physical healing is a powerful testimony of God's work, what about spiritual healing? Taking people out of the kingdom of darkness and bringing them into the kingdom of Jesus Christ? Giving them fruits, giving them faith and fruits of faith that show forth God's powerful work? Jesus says in John 13, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another." What a wonderful thing that God would work love in the hearts of his people. There is the sign that will draw people to say, "God is at work in that congregation. God is at work. See the love." Can people see that in our congregation? That will be a sign of God's work.

Finally, the comfort that you and I have, beloved, and that we ought to draw out of this text is that Jesus Christ will care for his church. After all is said and done, it wasn't the apostles that added the people to the church. It wasn't the people themselves inviting their neighbors. It wasn't the people themselves who added themselves to the church. No, the text says they were added. They were added. Believers were the more added. They were added to the Lord. That is to say, they were added by Jesus Christ. They were added by something outside of themselves. Those who are grammar students, why don't you look at that idea of the passive voice: they didn't do it themselves, somebody did it. They were added. The powerful Spirit of Christ worked in their hearts, drew them to the Gospel, had the Gospel preached to them and convicted them and caused them to sorrow over their sins and look to Jesus Christ for his righteousness. The Lord added them. Jesus Christ adds to the church and he will take care of his church. If somebody says, "Well, I don't know if I'm part of the body of Christ. I don't know if he has added me." Well, "Him that cometh to Jesus Christ," we need to hear that, "him that cometh unto Jesus Christ, unto him, he will in no wise cast out." Jesus says, "Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." Nobody can use that as an excuse and say, "Well, I want to be added but I don't feel added." All who come, Jesus Christ is adding to the church.

Will those who are added fall away? Those who are truly added to the church? Well, there are those who come into the church and are joined to the church institute, those who are joined outwardly but who are not truly members of Jesus Christ. Yes, they might fall out of the church but those who are truly added to Jesus Christ, those who are engrafted into the vine of Jesus Christ, brought into his life, they will not be separated. Not one will fall away. Can you imagine Jesus Christ dying for somebody, giving that much, even his own life for somebody, sending his Holy Spirit, joining them to himself and then somehow after all of that, then to let them go? That's not the way Jesus Christ works. He says, "None can snatch them out of my hand."

The Lord added to his body and he adds to the body also in our day and we might say, "Why don't we see multitudes being added to the church?" Well, the Lord adds to the body as he sees fit. He adds to the body through those who are born in the church. He

brings others from outside the church, exposes them to the Gospel, adds them to the body. He adds in his time. He adds those who belong. He will add those who belong to the church.

But striking, beloved, one last thing about this text is how the people brought their friends and their relatives, how they laid them in the streets. How some even from the towns surrounding Jerusalem brought their relatives and friends to Jerusalem; brought their sick there so that they would be healed. That was so that they would be healed physically, no doubt spiritually as well. That's an example for us. We ought to have a zeal for others: for acquaintances, for family members. A desire to bring them also, not just to be healed physically but to be healed spiritually, to spend our energies that they might experience that spiritual healing, bringing them to the church that they might hear the Gospel.

How shall we sit as regards the church of Jesus Christ as it is manifested in this place? Are we joined to the body? May God grant that we would show that, that we would show that living in one accord to the glory of his name. Amen.

Our Father which art in heaven, we thank thee for thy goodness to us. We thank thee for bringing us into the body though we confess we are not always manifesting the unity that is ours. Work in our hearts, we pray, that we would apply ourselves and be by thy grace with one accord, with one purpose, seeking to glorify thee and build one another up. We ask this, asking that thou forgive our sins too, we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.