

Foothills Christian Assembly Sermon September 4, 2022
Luke 5: 12 – 16 "God's Presence Is The Thriving Church"

1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? 4 "While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. 6 And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried him out, and buried him. 7 Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 And Peter answered her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?" She said, "Yes, for so much." 9 Then Peter said to her, "How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." 10 Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying her out, buried her by her husband. 11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch. 13 Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. 14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, 15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. 16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.

17 Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, 18 and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. 19 But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." 21 And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But the high priest and those with him came and called the council together, with all the elders of the children of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

22 But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, 23 saying, "Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!" 24 Now when the high priest, the captain of the temple, and the chief priests heard these things, they wondered what the outcome would be. 25 So one came and told them, saying, "Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" 26 Then the captain went with the officers and brought them without violence, for they feared the people, lest they should be stoned. 27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest asked them, 28 saying, "Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!" 29 But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

I. Introduction

- a. “An authentic church acts by order of God and on behalf of God. The apostles and their successors are emissaries of Jesus, witnesses of the crucified and risen Lord, preachers of the gospel, teachers of the truth about God, about humankind, about salvation, about restoration and transformation. If and when they act on behalf of God, devoted to his praise and glory, God can and will act through them—healing the sick, helping the impoverished, liberating those in bondage. For Luke, miracles are part of the nature of the church. The congregation of God’s people is concerned that people come to faith in Jesus so that they are granted salvation, and they are concerned that people find help in the midst of everyday challenges of sickness and pain, violence and abuse, unemployment and loneliness, failure and depression—both in words and in actions. If and when a congregation lives as the people of God who are being renewed and transformed, it will enjoy the privilege of being part of God’s mission who seeks and finds the lost.”¹
- b. Luke 5: 12 – 16 “God’s Presence Is The Thriving Church”
 - i. V11 – Context: Great Fear Came Upon Them All
 - ii. V12 – Many Signs and Wonders Accompany Unity Together
 - iii. V13 – Unbelievers Have Respect From a Distance
 - iv. V14 – Multitudes of Believers Added to the Lord
 - v. V15 – Healings in the Streets of Jerusalem
 - vi. V16 – Multitudes from Outside Jerusalem Healed
 - vii. Questions to know, love and obey God

II. V11 – Context: Great Fear Came Upon Them All

- a. 11 So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.
- b. So, Ananias and Sapphira conspired together to lie to the Church, and by doing so, they lied to God. Seeking to be seen as mature, humble and wise via their hypocrisy, instead, they each, one by one, fall down dead at Peter’s feet where they had laid their pretentious proceeds. Barnabas similar action, motivated by true love for Christ and His Church, not by self-advancement, leads to his praise from the pen of Luke. Barnabas, the son of encouragement contrasted with Ananias and Sapphira. God’s hand of blessing contrasted with God’s hand of judgment. Both have brought down great fear upon all the believers and upon all who have heard about these things.

III. V12a – Many Signs and Wonders Accompany Continued Unity Together

- a. 12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.

¹ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 5:1–16.

- b. In the midst of this environment of great fear toward God, the Lord brings to pass many signs and wonders through His apostles. These are not done in secret, in a corner, but rather openly, among the people.
- c. The Lord continues to answer the prayer raised up by the Church in Acts 4:24-30
 - i. "So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? 26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the LORD and against His Christ.' 27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 "to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 "Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 "by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."
- d. Luke presents miraculous healings and other signs and wonders as a normal part of the ongoing life of the Church.
- e. These mighty signs and wonders are the same kinds of miraculous acts Jesus did while He was walking on the earth. Remember Acts 1:1
 - i. "The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach..."
 - ii. Jesus began to do mighty deeds, and through His Church, He continues His mighty deeds. His Hand still stretches forth and touches, bringing heaven's kingdom's power to earth.
 - iii. Jesus began to teach of the Kingdom of God, and through His Church, He still speaks of His Kingdom by His Word and His Spirit. His Voice still goes out, via His Church.
- f. These signs and wonders have been a part of the ongoing life of the Church since the beginning, and they continue as the fear of God rests upon them and all the people.
- g. These signs and wonders are again connected with the heart and mind unity of the Church. They are all together, sharing the mind of Christ and the heart of Christ. He taught them during forty days after His resurrection, and during this time, He brought the previously scared and scattered crew into fearless unity in love and service to Him. Remember His commission to them shortly before His ascension, Lk 24:44-48:
 - i. "Then He said to them, "These [are] the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and [the] Prophets and [the] Psalms concerning Me." 45 And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. 46 Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day,

47 "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48 "And you are witnesses of these things."

- ii. Their "one accord" = a shared and mutual commitment to faith in Christ, and to doing God's will together.
 - 1. Faith = Jesus Christ is the Messiah foretold of old in Scripture Who had to suffer and die for the sins of His people, Who was resurrected from the dead by the Father, Who ascended on high and now lives and reigns at the Father's right hand over all things.
 - 2. Actions = Preaching and testifying (as witnesses) to this One Faith to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem: unto repentance and remission of sins
- h. Let's recall together the two prior summary sections in Acts that describe the healthy, thriving Church. Note particularly the themes of unity and power.
 - i. Acts 1:12-14 (shortly after this prayer, Peter preaches and Mathias is chosen, then Pentecost occurs)
 - 1. "Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey. 13 And when they had entered, they went up into the upper room where they were staying: Peter, James, John, and Andrew; Philip and Thomas; Bartholomew and Matthew; James [the son] of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot; and Judas [the son] of James. 14 These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."
 - ii. Acts 2
 - 1. "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added [to them]. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, 45 and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. 46 So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."
 - iii. Acts 4:32-35
 - 1. "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. 33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 34 Nor was

there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid [them] at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.”

IV. V13 – Unbelievers Have Respect From a Distance

- a. 13 Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly.
- b. “None of the rest” = the unbelieving Jewish people. Before the shocking deaths of Ananias and Sapphira, the unbelieving Jews remained apt to come near and talk with the believers, to mingle in their midst without much concern. But, now, after two pretenders drop dead, the unbelievers, not fully aware of what’s happening, decide to keep their distance.
- c. Yet, even as they stay back a bit, the unbelieving Jews still had great respect for the Church. The love of the believers one for another, the fellowship, the powerful preaching, the shared community, the peace and unity, and the power of God upon them caused the world to realize something noteworthy was happening.
 - i. “People who were merely curious were hesitant to approach the congregation and thus kept themselves at a safe distance. While the people who had been seized with fear when they heard of the sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira kept at a distance from the congregation of believers who were meeting in Solomon’s Portico, they “spoke highly” of the followers of Jesus. Awe, fear, and the expression of a favorable opinion are not mutually exclusive, but often connected.”²

V. V14 – Multitudes of Believers Added to the Lord

- a. 14 And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,
- b. Even in the midst of this esteem from a distance, multitudes are coming to faith in Christ. Note the distinguishing mark of Christians gives them their name in this section: “believers”
- c. “Increasingly added” = even more than before, the Church is growing very quickly
 - i. “The term “more than” (μᾶλλον) has a comparative meaning: more Jews than ever came to faith in Jesus as Lord (κύριος), as the risen and exalted Messiah and Savior. In view of the numbers given in 2:41 (3,000) and 4:4 (5,000), the plural πλήθη (“large numbers, multitudes”) should be interpreted in terms of many hundreds, if not thousands, of Jews who became believers in Jesus.”³

² Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 5:13.

³ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 5:14.

- d. “Added to the Lord” = note that being added to the Church is equivalent to being added to the Lord. See here how Luke equates Jesus with His People. Remember, indeed, we are the Body of Christ.
 - i. Thus, we can say Christ Himself Is the thriving Church. Only as Christ Himself animates and controls us together by His Spirit and Word will we know this beautiful and wondrous experience of being the thriving, healthy, powerful Church.
 - 1. “Believers are added to the Lord Jesus, joined to him, and so joined to his mystical body, from which nothing can separate us and cut us off, but that which separates us and cuts us off from Christ. Many have been brought to the Lord, and yet there is room for others to be added to him, added to the number of those that are united to him; and additions will still be making till the mystery of God shall be finished, and the number of the elect accomplished”⁴
- e. Both men and women: Luke emphasizes men and women coming as believers, emphasizing the faith of Christ granted to brothers and sisters, husband and wives, fathers and mothers.
 - i. “Notice is taken of the conversion of *women* as well as *men*; more notice than generally was in the Jewish church, in which they neither received the sign of circumcision nor were obliged to attend the solemn feasts; and the *court of the women* was one of the outer courts of the temple. But, as among those that followed Christ while he was upon earth, so among those that believed on him after he went to heaven, great notice was taken of the good women.”⁵

VI. V15 – Healings in the Streets of Jerusalem

- a. 15 so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them.
- b. Apparently, Solomon’s portico may have been too full or too far for some to bring their sick for healing. It’s likely these are those who had come to faith in Christ, or who were coming to faith in Christ. Think of it: the streets of Jerusalem covered with people on beds and couches, looking to Christ for healing.
 - i. “Jews living in Jerusalem carried sick relatives and friends out of their houses (ἐκφέρω) into the streets. It seems that the large number of thousands of believers made it impractical to carry all the sick people up to the temple complex into Solomon’s Portico. The term translated as “streets” (πλατεία) denotes a “wide road” or “street.” In Jerusalem, the main street which ran from northwest to south, leading from the New

⁴ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2082.

⁵ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2082.

City via the Tyropoeon Valley to Robinson's Arch at the southwest corner of the Temple Mount, was 10 meters wide, paved with stone slabs measuring 2 by 4 meters (with a sewer beneath the street up to 4 meters deep). Most of the other streets were more narrow, and without pavement."⁶

- c. There's no certainty that Peter's shadow actually healed anyone, but what is certain is that God had granted esteem and influence to His apostles to such an extent that even their shadow was connected with great power in the minds of the people.
 - i. Think of the woman seeking to touch the hem of Christ's robe and of Paul's handkerchief being associated with power.
 - 1. "In Luke 8:44, a woman believed that if she touched the fringe of Jesus' robe, she would be healed. The expectation that Paul's handkerchiefs had healing power (19:12) is similarly unusual."⁷

VII. V16 – Multitudes from Outside Jerusalem Healed

- a. 16 Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.
- b. Two new things in Acts occur here. First, we see for the first time the Gospel message reaching those outside Jerusalem. Secondly, we see unclean spirits brought under the power of God's Church.
 - i. "This is the first notice in Acts which indicates that people from outside Jerusalem were affected by the ministry of the apostles. Luke notes that a large number of people (πλήθος) who lived in the towns around (πέριξ) the city of Jerusalem also gathered."⁸
- c. Note how the glory and power of the Church in Jerusalem attracts people even from outside their own town. The news is spreading of God's great glory in these people, and especially the suffering come to the Church for help. The sick and the demon-tormented are drawn to Christ's healing power in His Church.
 - i. "Jews who lived in the various towns of Judea, just like the Jews living in Jerusalem, gathered their sick relatives and friends and brought them to the apostles. Luke specifies that people who were "tormented by unclean spirits" were also "cured" (ἐθεραπεύοντο) by the apostles. The expression "unclean spirits" (πνεύματα ἀκάθαρτα) probably refers to demons. They are "unclean" because they are evil and separated from

⁶ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 5:15.

⁷ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 5:15.

⁸ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 5:16.

the purity of God and of his people. In antiquity such terms were used “to explain serious psychic disturbances, whose causes they were unable to diagnose.” The present participle “tormented” (ὄχλουμένους) indicates that the “torment” which was inflicted by evil spirits on some of these people was a permanent condition. The particle καί, which separates the sick (ἀσθενεῖς) from those tormented by unclean spirits, indicates that here Luke keeps the two categories of afflictions separate (different in Luke 13:11). Luke notes that all (ἅπαντες) who wanted to be healed were actually healed.”⁹

VIII. Questions to know, love and obey God

⁹ Eckhard J. Schnabel, [Acts](#), Expanded Digital Edition., Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), Ac 5:16.