

The Take-Off

To this point on our little journey through Acts and the history of the early church, we've learned a couple obvious truths: one, they saw and did church differently than we do today, and two, they weren't afraid to trust God and try whatever he asked them to do.

This morning we're going to take a look at a section that proves to continue that trend. This is one bizarre, jacked up story that most of us haven't spent a lot of time thinking about because of the implications.

It's definitely not one for bedtime devotions with the kiddies!

So, let me make a little disclaimer, then I'll walk you through with some pretty broad strokes what's happening in these verses before I make 3 conclusions about what we'll see. Then, when we've gotten through all of that, I'll give you three tests that you can take to see if you're getting these truths.

Confused? No biggie. Hang on and I'll unpack this for you.

First, the disclaimer: what I'm teaching you this morning is not necessarily the way every other pastor or church might see it. I'm okay with that. What I'm not okay with is any of us just reading these verses and not actually considering how they should impact our lives. You may find yourself scratching your head a bit, but that's a good thing.

Now, the overview of the passage. You have to understand what's happening or else the conclusions that follow won't make much sense.

So, let's start reading and getting a picture of what's going on at the end of Acts 4 and the beginning of Acts 5.

Buckle up...

After all the persecution to this point (Peter and John had just gotten out of prison), the church has some good stuff happening at the end of Acts 4:

- They were unified (v. 32), generous (v. 32) and sharing amazing testimonies (v. 33)
- They all had a lot of grace (lit. means "that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness")
 - not the words most people would use to describe the church today
 - 91% of unchurched **16-29 year-olds** use the word "antihomosexual" instead. 80% of churched did, too.
- There weren't any needy among them.
- This happened because people would sell stuff and give the money to the church
- v. 35 says that the church would then distribute the money to anyone as he had need
- Think through that process: God could have made money appear, but he plan was to use the believer to fund the blessings for others, and many did so willingly
- One is named specifically: Joseph

But chapter 5 takes a terrible turn:

- A husband and wife also sell something and give the proceeds to the church, but first kept part of it for themselves
- God tells Peter what they've done and he exposes the hypocrisy and he dies
- Now, what is hypocrisy? Simple definition: pretending to have something you don't. Ananias (and later Sapphira) pretended to have the same generous spirit that Joseph and others had.
- 3 hours later his wife shows up and Peter asks her what they sales price was. She lies, too, and dies, too.
- v. 11 sums up the church's response to this: great fear ("phobos" - terror, dread) seized the church

The aftermath of this hypocrisy cleansing?

- v. 12 says the apostles had even greater power
- They were even more respected (v. 13)
- The numbers in the church continued to climb (v. 14)
- The ministry spilled out into the streets (v. 15) and all were healed (v. 16)

Now, the obvious question is what does it mean for us?

Here are 3 conclusions that I think we can take away from this passage (and surprisingly, none of them are about money, because this passage is about hypocrisy and honesty):

1. Sunday is the least important day of the week.

Let me make sure I explain this well, because this is a radically different way of viewing Sundays.

I'm not saying Sundays aren't important, but rather that we need to elevate the importance of living authentic, Christian lives Monday through Saturday.

For a lot of churches, Sunday is Gameday. For us, it is the endzone, complete with celebration dances and spiked footballs. We believe that what we've done on the other six days matters a whole lot more than what we do on one morning, and that our faith is defined more by our daily walk than our weekly worship.

This helps to frame today's Big Idea: Our actions on The Other Six create reactions on the seventh.

In the last part of Acts 4, the daily walk with Jesus by so many resulted in incredible times together as offerings were brought and needs were met. On the negative side, the hypocritical actions of a husband and wife during the week caused a horrific reaction when they came together.

All this leads to the next observation...

2. Sunday reveals our hypocrisy or honesty on The Other Six.

We've heard the marketing slogan, "what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas."

That's not true in the Christian faith. What happens on The Other Six days doesn't stay there. It spills over onto the seventh day.

On Sundays, we all have the same choice: honestly worship or hypocritically wither.

Luke tells a great story that illustrates this in 18:9-14. A tax collector worshiped God humbly and went home justified. The hypocritical Pharisee did not.

The reason for that is the third observation:

3. Hypocrisy results if death, but honesty results in growth

Perhaps if we don't get anything else from this story, it would be good to get this.

Acting on Sunday as if we possess intimacy with Jesus on The Other Six days when we really don't will always lead to death.

Now, you and I may not fall over dead during the service (although that would really get other people's attention, wouldn't it?), but it will lead us one step at a time towards death.

Proverbs 14:12 says that the way that seems right to man leads to death, and the way that seems right to man is to pretend to have it all together even if he doesn't.

To smile even though we just fought WW3 in the car with the family on the way to worship.

And that double life is a lie straight from the devil in hell.

What God desires is found in Joel 2:12-14.

When God purges hypocrisy from our lives and our churches, the result is growth. That's what we find in Acts 5:12-16: a church filled with fear of the Lord, a greater desire for holiness, and uncontrollable growth that was spilling out into the streets. They found themselves with a greater ministry on The Other Six than on the seventh.

The Landing

What's it look like when all of us begin to raise the importance of an authentic daily walk with Jesus?

The result of living with The Other Six in mind is that we will begin to define success differently

I want to offer you 3 tangible tests that can help you know that you're winning in this area:

TEST #1: We'll talk less and do more.

In fact, here's a little experiment you should try: take one full week and stop talking about what bugs you and start doing more for others in need. You could be like I was when I started praying for someone who was really hurting me and I ended up developing a genuine love and concern for his soul.

TEST #2: Your days won't be defined by what you did as much as by who you were with.

At the core of who we are as people and as a church are two words: be near. We were created relationally, and our most fulfilling days will always be days spent with people versus checking off a to-do list.

TEST #3: Little things will have a bigger meaning.

The church is full of people who are looking for the next big thing, but the next big thing is probably found by faithfully doing the little things God has given you to do. Everyday faithfulness is far more powerful than the most charged atmosphere during a Sunday service and, ironically, it leads to a lot of those types of Sunday services.

If you are like most of us, this is a very different view of faith and life. Not different from Jesus' view, just the modern "give him an hour or two but never let him into the other areas of my life" view. And so the natural question is "how do we change things?"

"How do we get from here to there?"

The answer is a simple one, with two words: **BABY STEPS.**

[Video]

So often we make Sundays so important that we find ourselves always looking for the great service, the best church.

We visit churches and we ask ourselves questions like "Is this the type of church I would want to come to? Would I want to bring my friends to a church like this?"

We put all of our eggs in the one basket of Sunday, but this morning I want to reverse that question for you.

If you are a follower of Jesus, then you are the church.

If one of my lost friends had followed you this past week on The Other Six days, would he or she have found you the type of church they would want to be a part of?

It's time for a change.

I want to leave you alone with that for a few minutes - just you and the Lord. He isn't after perfection from you, but honesty about you. Talk to him. "Return to the Lord, for he is gracious and compassionate..."