Acts 4:23-5:11

“Great God, Great Giving!”

1. **Intro:**
   1.1. **Communion** (Read 4:23) What peace for Peter/John in returning to their own companions? Everyone ought to belong to the best possible company… and that is the Church! - For we are the only society that… Has God as Founder; Christ as Savior; has a qualification for entrance (blood bought); real human fellowship; reputation for best work done worldwide; & a guarantee that it will last forever!
   1.1.2. It’s a blessing this morning to gather with my own companions.
      1.1.2.1. There are many things that unite us humans: some are united by music, art, literature, similar political views, ideas, principles,
      1.1.2.2. It’s “birds of a feather flocking together”; it’s like chemical affinities where particles attract to each other (bond).
      1.1.2.3. On the spiritual plane, communion is: a gravitation of the godly, a communion in Christ, a band of brothers, a return to our own companions!

1.2. **Harvest Festival:** (very nice, very intimate, thanks helpers)
   1.2.1. Rose Starr’s Blog regarding Halloween - I think of all the "holidays" that we Americans celebrate, Halloween is the most community centered. When else are most people’s porch lights on and doors open with a smiling face behind it? Hope you enjoyed last night too!

1.3. We read now a report of the church’s prayer of gratitude for God’s deliverance of Peter & John from the Jewish Authorities.
   1.3.1. Peter & John just freed from an overnighter in jail.
   1.3.2. Released because of the people (& healing).
   1.3.3. Warned not to preach again. They said they must!

1.4. **Outline:** Great Prayer; Great Power; Great Grace; Great Fear; Great Giving.

1.5. **Note** a number of 1st: 1st mention of “church” (ekklesia); 1st mention of the detailed account of the inner life of the church; 1st mention of a member to be renamed; 1st mention of a burial in the Christian community.

2. **GREAT PRAYER!** (4:23-31)
   2.1. They depended on prayer & directed it towards a Sovereign God who made everything & can do anything!

   2.2. **3-Fold REASON!** (23-28)
   2.3. God as Creator; God as “Anointer” of Jesus; God as One who Determines.
   2.4. Based it on Ps.2, which is a wonderful song when you are being attacked!
2.5. **3-Fold REQUEST!** (29,30)

2.6. Boldness *(not for protection)*; Healings; Signs & Wonders.

2.7. **3-Fold RESULT!** (31)

2.8. The assembly was **Shaken**; they all were **Filled**; **Boldness** was granted.

2.9. Now that’s a prayer meeting! – But do you desire to feel things **shake down here**, or isn’t it better to **shake things up there**?

2.10. Their prayer was immediate, united, unselfish, undaunted, & Scriptural.

3. **GREAT POWER!** *(4:32-33a)*

3.1. Here we have a concept that was brought up in 2:45, now amplified.

3.1.1. The early believers were living in **harmony & unity**. [1 heart, 1 soul]

3.1.2. **Proof** of this was expressed in the **sharing** of their resources with one another.

3.1.3. Through the charity of the wealthier members, *like Barnabas*, the poor received enough.

3.1.3.1. **Result**: none among them was in need!

3.1.3.2. “The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not lack/be in want.”

3.2. **Illustration**: A **Locomotive** is a wonderful piece of machinery, but it must have 3 components: Steam; Rails; & an Engineer.

3.2.1. **Steam for Power**; **Rails for Direction**; **Engineer for Control** [*rightly handle*]

3.2.2. And so with Christianity: we need…

3.2.3. The **H.S.** for Power; we must go in **God’s way** for Direction; and be filled with **Grace** for Control.

4. **GREAT GRACE!** *(4:33b-37)*

4.1. The **sincere self-sacrifice** of Barnabas is compared with the **hypocrisy & greed** of Ananias & Sapphira. (see “but” in 5:1)

4.1.1. His gift **exposed** the sin of Ananias & Sapphira, just as Mary’s gift *(bottle of perfume)* exposed Judas’ sin *(Jn.12, this could have been sold for...)*

4.2. **Story**: I met a man in Kosovo (not a bel.) who understood this concept of “meeting needs” better than I. – He had 26 in his household. 2 other brothers & their families & his own. He explained, “we pool all our resources & finances together so all will have.” I ignorantly responded, “well that works well if your brothers are hard workers!” He said, “No, both of them were w/o work for a while, & I supported all 26 of us…(& then the clincher) because that’s what families do!”

4.3. John Stott said, “Although in **fact & in law** they continued to own their goods, yet in **heart & mind** they cultivated an attitude so radical that they thought of their possessions as being available to help needy sisters & brothers”.

4.3.1. **Result**: No poverty existed in the church!
4.3.2. **Peter Wagner**, “Nothing is wrong with having rich people in the church, but something is wrong about having poor people in the church!”

4.4. Maybe **John** was remembering **Barnabas** when he later wrote “If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” 1 Jn.3:17,18

5. **GREAT FEAR! (5:1-8)**

5.1. **THE DECEPTION OF ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA! (1,2)**

5.2. No doubt they were glad to be apart of the movement & were serious about their involvement.

5.3. They sought to go after both worlds: sell the property & make a show of giving it to the church, but keep part of the proceeds hidden.¹

5.4. **THE DISCOVERY OF ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA! (3,4)**

5.5. The couple lied to the Holy Spirit, to God, to the Church, & to Peter; & it cost them their lives.

5.5.1. Ananias had violated his own integrity, perjured the very spirit of God who now lived in his life. (yes, I believe they were believers)

5.6. (4) This point is very important…this was entirely voluntary!!!

5.6.1. It was completely in their control before the sale, & after the sale.

5.7. Their sin was not taking money from God but in pretending to be something they were not.²

5.7.1. The kingdom principle is not to do without material goods. The principle is that we should not give material goods preeminence! 5.7.1.1. It’s seek 1st His Kingdom, then we won’t lack material goods. 5.7.1.2. In the Lord’s prayer, we 1st pray Your Kingdom come, then give us this day our daily bread. [the order is important, it indicates priority]

5.8. **THE DEATH OF ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA! (5-11)**

5.9. **ANANIAS’ DEATH! (5,6)**

5.9.1. His sin was traced back to Satan(4) but the will of man yields, it isn’t overpowered. When Satan is resisted he will flee!

5.9.2. He had the liberty to retain, the liberty to sell, the liberty to give only part, but not the liberty to lie!

5.9.2.1. He was held personally accountable to this premeditated sin.

5.9.3. He had no chance to react. Why so severe a punishment?

5.9.4. Before you think the thought, “If I had extra land to sell I would give all, or tell the truth about what portion I gave”, consider hypocrisy

¹ Shepherd’s Notes; pg.18
² Warren Wiersbe; With the Word; pg.709.
comes in many shades of dark! {not only exaggerating gifts, or minimizing the means of giving, but boasting wrongly of worship, devotion, your use of time, etc.}

5.10. The worse form of pretense is religious: (i.e.) Simulated holiness; virtual piety; veneer Christianity; fabricated devotion; or sham worship.

5.10.1. “No chalk-line Christians!”

5.11. Sad, the 1st burial in Christian community was that of a hypocrite.

5.11.1. But my question isn’t why did he punish Ananias so swiftly, but why has he kept me alive knowing my heart, hearing my mind, & seeing my actions for the last 27 years!

5.12. SAPPHIRA’S DEATH! (7-11)

5.12.1. 3 hours later Sapphira arrives.

5.13. Story: Couple in counseling many years ago(not from here) who didn’t do their homework (joint sin).


5.14.1. Ekklesia – a free assembly of people. (an idea that reaches back to the group in the Exodus from Egypt)

5.15. The event had a powerful effect on the church! Uh Yaah!

5.15.1. God’s quick & decisive punishment created great fear in the church.

5.15.2. Its members were terrified – a natural response to witnessing the power of God.

5.15.3. Such radical judgment is not the usual way God deals with believers today.

5.15.3.1. We need to get the message we don’t get away with impunity (exemption from punishment). There are consequences to our decisions…& they come in all kinds of different ways.

5.16. This event has little to do with the amount a person gives.

5.16.1. The importance lies with one’s attitude!!!

5.16.1.1. Outward & Inward attitudes are affected by Upward attitude!

5.16.2. Their offering was to impress the congregation.

5.16.3. The fact they held back the $, & claimed they had given the whole sale price, reflected a self-serving attitude, not one that served God.

6. GREAT GIVING! (END)

6.1. What example can we follow from the action of Barnabas? What danger can we avoid from the attitude of Ananias & Sapphira? Does the picture by our church today resemble that of the early Church shown here? [YES to any need!] [NO to regular giving]
6.2. I would like to take the rest of our time & share my heart on having a giving heart!
6.2.1. If you haven’t noticed it’s not my favorite subject:
6.2.2. I fully understand & believe its importance, but talks on giving have been so abused in the church!

6.3. Explain where we’re at right now:

6.4. School great job (great tightening their belts in every area; but also have the ability to raise tuition)

6.5. Church is different we can’t raise our price of admission. 😊
6.5.1. So, what we can do is trim as best we can.
6.5.2. We’ve changed out much of our lighting (see gym) to save on elec.
6.5.3. Men we’ve gone waterless on our urinals. (save 40,000 gallons per year, per urinal, plus they’re free & they install them)
6.5.4. And we are continuing to save in different areas.
6.5.4.1. We just saved approx 10,000 on Harvest.
6.5.4.2. I just made the decision to redo our plans for X-mas ($30,000 down to $10,000).
6.5.4.3. Like all families, sometimes you can afford the big vacations & other times its tent camping! (After seeing the sweet fellowship of Harvest, I’m not bummed about X-mas. We don’t need “fancy” at CCM. It’s nice, but we don’t always need it)

6.5.5. Here’s where it hit me this week: At missions board meeting. Saying NO to a number of requests. Then hearing of the growing needs of our Feeding Ministry [from 4 families to almost 100 families, in 27 weeks] (PTL someone stepped up & covered the finances on that)

6.6. Now I challenge all of us. Our leadership, our staff (Wed), & you!
6.6.1. What is your hearts attitude towards giving? (smile or frown?)
6.6.2. Have you witnessed what we’re doing & where we are going?
6.6.3. Are you comfortable in investing in the kingdom here? (if not why not?)
6.6.4. What amount or percentage have you purposed in your giving?

6.7. Cautions:
6.7.1. Don’t think, “this church is big & someone else will do it”.
6.7.2. Don’t think, “this church looks pretty well taken care of…I’ll designate my tithe over here.” (What if everyone did that?)
6.7.2.1. Understand to do the feeding ministry we need: our parking lot, storage here, storage off site, electricity, phones, email, cell phones, someone to coordinate it, bathrooms, extra counseling.
6.7.3. Don’t reduce giving into a “net or gross” question.
6.7.4. Don’t make this automatically into a tithe/10% idea.
6.7.4.1. Although, if the NT church simply started w/a tithe poverty would be obliterated.
6.7.4.2. Our goal isn’t to be a good little Pharisee who ritualistically **tithes** from his salt & pepper shakers, but misses the more important matters (*justice, & love of God*).

6.7.5. Be free from Law or Burden or yoke!

6.7.6. Some who faithfully give 10% need to be **freed** from the 10%.

6.7.6.1. I mean take the **next step** & move to a **graduated tithe**: increase the percentage each year that God blesses your increase.

6.8. **What was the OT tithe?** Was it 10%? - No, it looked more like this:

6.8.1. Every Jew was required by the Levitical law to pay 3 **tithes of his property** (1) 1 tithe for the **Levites** (2) 1 for the use of the **temple** & the **great feasts** (3) 1 for the **poor** of the land.\(^3\)

6.8.2. 1\(^{st}\) Mosaic Law regarding tithing was in - Lev.27:30-33.

6.8.3. Listen to the heart of the 1\(^{st}\) reformation of religion during Hezekiah’s reign - 2 Chron. 31:5,6.

6.8.4. Pastors & church staff – when the Levites received the tithe they were to tithe from it. (Numb 18:26)

6.8.5. **Illustration:** Go home & grab 10% of all you own: 10% of your can food; oatmeal; clothes in your closet; hair brushes; oil in your garage)

6.8.5.1. **Then**, 10% of all your **earnings**.

6.8.5.2. **Then** set aside all the edges of your fields for the poor to come & glean (that %?)

6.9. **What was the OT tithe?** Well it was more like 30-40%?

6.10. **But instead:**

6.10.1. Most importantly 1\(^{st}\) identify **giving** as “**Worship!**”

6.10.2. Ask God, “**What’s Your heart on this for me, or our family**”?

6.10.3. Seek God to be a **generous** giver.

6.10.4. Give **regularly** & **cheerfully**.

6.10.5. Do it unto the **glory** of God!

6.10.6. Realize it is better to **give** than to receive!

6.10.7. Pray, pray, pray for our finances, that we might **spend wisely** & the body would **give generously**.

6.11. I pray the response **wouldn’t** be a **fat check** in the tithe box.

6.11.1. **I pray the response is:** Every family who is a part of our community here at CCM to **go home, & purpose** in their heart what the **Lord** would have them to do.

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