

*“Great God, Great Giving!”*

## 1. **Intro:**

- 1.1. **Communion**(Read 4:23) What peace for Peter/John in returning to *their own companions*
  - 1.1.1. 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 overnigher 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 1<sup>st</sup>: 1<sup>st</sup> mention of "**church**"(*ekklesia*); 1<sup>st</sup> mention of the detailed account of the **inner life of the church**; 1<sup>st</sup> mention of a member to be renamed; 1<sup>st</sup> 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.<sup>1</sup>
- 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.**<sup>2</sup>
- 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 1<sup>st</sup> His Kingdom**, then we won't **lack material goods**.
- 5.7.1.2. In the Lord's prayer, we 1<sup>st</sup> 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**

<sup>1</sup> Shepherd's Notes; pg.18

<sup>2</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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. **Church** – 1<sup>st</sup> time used in Acts.  
 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.<sup>3</sup>
- 6.8.2. 1<sup>st</sup> Mosaic Law regarding tithing was in - **Lev.27:30-33**.
- 6.8.3. Listen to the heart of the 1<sup>st</sup> 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<sup>st</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup>Easton, M. (1996, c1897). *Easton's Bible dictionary*. Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.