

Don't Steal from God Acts 4:32-5:11

Sermon Description

At the end of Acts 4, the followers of Jesus were living a radical, new life of generosity, selflessness, and compassion for one another. Barnabas is set out as an example of this type of living. However, the enemy attacks the believers by appealing to the sinful flesh and raising up greed, pride, and deceit. God's swift and righteous judgment reminds the believers that sin is serious and that he has saved us to live a new life.

Discussion Questions

1. How have you seen the movement of God bring on the attack of the enemy?
2. How do you see pride in your heart tempting you to pretend to be holier, more generous, more faithful than you are?
3. When have you had the opportunity to be generous but chose to hold back? How did that impact you?
4. When have you attempted to deceive God about your heart, your thoughts, your attitude, or your actions?
5. Why do we use God's grace as permission to indulge or excuse our sin?
6. How can we encourage each other to remain humble, transparent, and honest about who we are and the work that God is doing in us?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that God will protect his church from attacks from without and attacks from within.
2. Pray that our hearts will be changed by the grace of God so that we no longer love money but that we will love people.
3. Pray that God will wake up our community from the comfortable slumber of wealth and affluence to see their need for Jesus the Savior.
4. Pray for God to show you how pride and self-serving are threatening your participation in the genuine, biblical community of God's people.

(Slides)

Ananias and Sapphira Acts 4:32-5:11

Big Idea

God's Grace is Not Permission to Sin but the Power to Transform!

God at Work in Acts 4

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. Acts 4:32

1. Everything We Have Belongs to the Lord! 4:32-37

Stewardship = *the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care*

Keys for Giving

- 1. Generosity vs Selfishness**
- 2. Freedom vs Compulsion. (Did it not remain yours?)**
- 3. God's Kingdom vs My Kingdom**

Practical Ways we Give:

- 1. Regular giving through offerings as worship**
- 2. Special opportunities communicated through the church**
- 3. Community group, connections and relationships within the church**
- 4. Neighbors, community connections**

2. You can deceive Others, You can deceive Yourself, but You Cannot Deceive God! 5:1-4

A Tragic Exception

“But a man named Ananias...” Acts 5:1

“If the devil’s first tactic was to destroy the Church by force from without, his second was to destroy it by falsehood from within.” John Stott

What else do we Hold Back from God?

24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 19:24-25

3. The Power and Judgement of God are Real and Terrifying! 5:5-11

“Grace is not permission to keep on loving things, but the power to stop loving things and start loving people!” - John Piper

Next Steps

- Be Generous, Be compassionate, Love People More than Possessions.
- Work on Honesty and Transparency.
- Invite others to walk with you in your journey of Discipleship.
- Celebrate the freedom of God’s Grace but freedom to Grow and not to Indulge in Sin.

(Sermon Notes)

Ananias and Sapphira Acts 4:32-5:11

Introduction: When God is at Work, the Enemy Attacks!

Big Idea: God's Grace is Not Permission to Sin but the Power to Transform!

Evidences of God at Work in Acts 4:

→ Now the full number of those who believed. (Remember the thousands that were coming to faith in Jesus!)

- Those who Believed!!! Faith in Jesus as the Messiah:
- Son of God, Born of a Virgin, Lived in the flesh, fully God and fully human.
- Lived a perfectly sinless life, obedient to the Father, experiencing the temptations that we all face but not giving into them, living the holy life we should live but do not and cannot.
- Crucified, put to death on the cross not for his own crimes, but to stand in our place and bear our guilt and atone for our sins.
- Buried in the tomb and on the third day, raised to life again! Victorious over death,
over sin, and over the grave.

Had everything in common: not a Utopia or Commune, the solution to the problems of our lives and our world do not rest in the way we organize or distribute possessions. No political system can create for us a world that eliminates evil and greed and poverty because these are all rooted in the heart of people! This was a result of a radical heart change!

→ Loved God above everything else and loved others as oneself!

1. Everything We Have Belongs to the Lord! 4:32-37

This is the heart behind "Stewardship"!

Stewardship = the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care

Stewardship Actions:

- 1. Lifestyle Choices that enable us to use our resources for God's Purposes (debt, income, spending, commitments, tastes, habits, must-haves, wants/needs)**
- 2. Budgeting Practices that set us up to be able to give Regularly, Generously, Sacrificially**
- 3. Heart that Loves God and People more than possessions**

How have you set yourself up to

Keys for Giving

Generosity vs Selfishness

Freedom vs Compulsion. (Did it not remain yours?)

God's Kingdom vs My Kingdom

These Principles apply whether you have little or much!

Practical Ways we Give:

1. Regular giving through offerings as worship
2. Special opportunities communicated through the church
3. Community group, connections and relationships within the church
4. Neighbors, community connections

Why do we hold on to money and possessions?

For security, for comfort, for pride, for self-serving.

2. You can deceive Others, You can deceive Yourself, but You Cannot Deceive God! 5:1-4

→ "But a man named Ananias..." how tragic to have one's life stand in contrast to the working of God!

No church is safe from the threat of the sinful heart

No person is immune from the infection of greed and pride and self-serving

→ A threat to biblical community and the advancement of the Gospel. Last week: an attack on the church from outside to stop the Gospel, but this only leads to greater boldness! This week: a more effective attack on the church, from within by the corruption of the hearts of the believers. Repeated over and over from Acts 5 until now!

As John Stott put it, **“If the devil’s first tactic was to destroy the Church by force from without, his second was to destroy it by falsehood from within.”**

And so this is not simply a story of greed in the early Church. It’s about an attack on the church from within—an enemy scared and trying to stop the great momentum of the gospel.

What pretense do we put on for others?
In what ways are we being dishonest with ourselves?
What are we trying to hide from God?

Are we pretending to be holier than we are?
Do we lie to ourselves about our motivations?
Are we holding back parts of ourselves from God’s oversight and correction?

What are we stealing from God?

- Money/possessions
- Time
- Talents
- Presence
- Commitment

24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. Hebrews 19:24-25

3. The Power and Judgement of God are Real and Terrifying! 5:5-11

It is healthy to fear the judgement of God in relation to our sin.

We each rightly deserve to be judged and condemned for our sin!

The power of God get's people's attention:

points non-believers to Jesus and their need for him
confronts believers for their need to draw close, grow deeper

God is a holy God who vanquishes evil and zealously defends his holiness. His judgments are his, and he only makes some of them known.

God truly is holy! He cannot abide sin.
We should not take sin lightly!

And... God knows every thought in our minds, every intention of our hearts, every attitude, every word muttered to ourselves. God sees us in total completeness!

Grace, Grace, Grace!!! We have grace in Jesus, but this does not give us license.

“Grace is not permission to keep on loving things, but the power to stop loving things and start loving people!”

Next Steps

- Be Generous, Be compassionate, Love People More than Possessions.**
- Work on Honesty and Transparency even if it means letting people see that you are not as holy as you want to be.**
- Invite others to walk with you in your journey of Discipleship.**
- Celebrate the freedom of God's Grace but freedom to Grow and not to Indulge in Sin.**