

Sermon Notes

“Together in Faith: Honest to God”

David Renwick, February 18, 2018

Acts 4:1-31

The First Church was strengthened

1. By the shared experience of Jesus’ Resurrection (4:2, 10, 20, 34)
2. By companionship with Jesus (4:13)
We can share this companionship through reading the Gospels
3. By deliberate, prayerful relationships with fellow believers (4:23-31)

Acts 4:32-5:11

(Note: *The story in Acts 5 of Ananias and Sapphira points to a “reversal of roles” from the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3 – It is the man’s decision that leads to the “first sin” that destroys the “paradise” of the first church. The point of both stories is not “he or she” but “all of us”*).

Paradise & Perfection in the Early Church

- a. Unity and Grace (4:32-33)
- b. Lavish Generosity: A True Belief in Stewardship
 - Ownership – but for God’s Purposes (4:32, 34)
 - Meeting Human Needs in the church and beyond (4:34-35)
- c. Peer Pressure at its Best
 - Watching others and being inspired for good (4:36-37)

“Paradise Lost” & the Imperfection of the Early Church

- a. Peer Pressure at its Worst:
 - The Temptation of Appearances (5:1-2)
 - Our accountability for choices (5:3-4)
 - The downward spiral of lies – to self, to God, to others (5:3-4,8)
- b. The Corruption of Relationships and Community
 - Begins in close relationships (like marriage) first . . . (5:7-9)
 - *The strength and effectiveness of any organization is intimately related to the level of trust between members*

The Need for Rigorous Self-Assessment for Real Change and Growth

Review the “Twelve Steps” of Alcoholics Anonymous. E.g.:

- Step 2: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
- Step 4: Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- Step 11: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

Responsive Scripture Reading

Psalm 139

Lord, you have searched me and known me.

**You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.**

You search out my path and my lying down,

and are acquainted with all my ways.

Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely.

You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;

it is so high that I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there;

if I make my bed in Death, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

**even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.**

If I say, “Surely the darkness shall cover me,

and the light around me become night,”

even the darkness is not dark to you;

the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you.

The Madison Singers

11 a.m.

Prelude

Ask and It Shall Be Given You

Do Not Be Afraid

Softly

Lux Aurumque

Jonathan Adams

Philip Stopford

Will Todd

Eric Whitacre

Choral Amen

Franz Biebl

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