way to the temple and were subsequently arrested. Here all the apostles were doing so in the temple. The signs and wonders revealed the tremendous power that was associated with the name of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. They caught the people's attention and prevented the Jewish leaders from easily explaining the message of Jesus away. The signs and wonders were a confirmation that these men came from God and proclaimed the message of God. Luke added a curious phrase about "the rest" not associating with them. The question is who are the rest? It cannot refer to the apostles, because all the apostles were doing signs and wonders in the temple. The people held them in high esteem, so the rest doesn't refer to the people. It was out of the people that more and more were believing in Jesus (v. 14). It is probable that the rest refers to the Jewish leaders, not just those on the ruling council that had arrested Peter and John earlier but other leaders. Perhaps it was just dangerous for men of standing to associate with the apostles, just as it had been an obstacle for some leaders to associate with Jesus, even though they believed in him. Luke's point seems to be that in the midst of this chaotic situation where the Jewish Ruling Council was adamantly opposed to the gospel, there was great power being demonstrated and many were coming to faith in Jesus, yet others were afraid. It is the similar to what Peter had said that Jesus was the stone that the builders rejected, but had become the capstone. During his ministry Jesus had said that he had come to divide. Early on in their ministry the apostles witnessed how people would divide over Jesus.

Saturday, October 22, 2011

Daily theme: The Holy Spirit draws multitudes to those who follow Jesus.

Questions

Read Acts 5:14-16

1. Why would people put the sick out in the street?
2. What does the response of the people reveal about them?

Consider

Before Jesus died, he said that through the Holy Spirit his followers would do greater works than he had done (John 14:12). Here we see an example of that. Apparently people were being healed merely because they were near Peter so that his shadow would fall on them. While Luke does not expressly say people were being healed he implies it because the context is that great signs and wonders were being done. If the people were doing this but not getting healed, this would not fit with the context. We have no record of anything like this taking place during Jesus' ministry, but it did occur in the apostles' ministry. In addition to people in Jerusalem coming to the temple to be healed, others were coming from the surrounding areas. Luke explicitly wrote that all were being healed, not just some. Great power was being displayed through the apostles. The response of the people revealed their great desire to be set free (Isaiah 61:1-2). When people hear of God working powerfully they will travel great distances to be near to what God is doing. This was true during the Great Awakening of our history. People would travel great distances in order to hear men like George Whitefield and John Wesley, just like they did to receive the healing touch from the apostles. How far would you travel for such an encounter with God?

A pure passion for Jesus leads to power to advance the kingdom.

Acts 5:1-16

Sermon Series: Acts 5:1-16

Devotional Notes October 17-22, 2011

Monday, October 17, 2011

Daily theme: There is a risk in holding back and appearing like you're not.

Questions

Read Acts 5:1-2

1. Why did Luke begin this passage with the words "but a man"?
2. Why was it an issue if Ananias kept back part of the proceeds from the sale?

Consider

Luke began this section with a contrast with what he had just recounted. In Acts 4:36-37, Luke had written of a generous man by the name of Joseph (Barnabas), who was a positive example of those who sold their possessions in order to meet the needs of the poor. Luke began the next story contrasting it to what he had written earlier. There are parts of this passage that have not been explained adequately and still remain mysterious. The lack of clarity revolves around the fact that Luke used an unusual word translated "kept back". The same word was used again in verse 3. What is curious about this word is that it is used again in Titus 2:10. In that passage the word is translated as "pilfering" (NASB, ESB) and "steal" (NIV). It is a surprising word to describe Ananias' action. Normally we would not consider it stealing to give only a part of the proceeds of the sale of a possession, but this is how Luke describes the action. It is unclear why the Holy Spirit led Luke to use this word and not another one. It is clear that in his actions, Ananias communicated that he was giving the entire amount of the sale. In this way he would have acted as a hypocrite. However it might also mean that the practice was to sell the possession and give all of the proceeds, not just part. In this case, the money acquired from the sale was considered to belong to the needy and no longer belonging to the one who sold the possession. In this way holding on to even a part of the proceeds could have been understood as stealing, or embezzling. At any rate Ananias clearly misrepresented his generosity and quite possibly worse he decided to keep part of the proceeds which belonged to God.

Tuesday, October 18, 2011

Daily theme: Holding back and practicing deception is the same as lying to the Holy Spirit.

Questions

Read Acts 5:3-4

1. How could Peter have known that Ananias was holding back part of the proceeds from the sale?
2. Why was Ananias' behavior so serious?

Consider
In his interaction with Ananias, Peter revealed an extraordinary ability. Ananias brought the proceeds of the sale to the apostles and laid it down, apparently acting that it was all that they had received. Out of the blue, Peter condemned Ananias for his attempt to deceive the Holy Spirit. How could Peter have known what Ananias was doing? In 1 Corinthians 12: 8, Paul referred to a spiritual gift described as "a word of knowledge". Peter's knowledge of Ananias' actions may have been an example of a word of knowledge. Through the Holy Spirit Peter could have known what Ananias doing and rebuked him publicly. Peter's words indicate that deceit and hypocrisy were taking place. Verse 4 reveals that Ananias was not compelled to sell his property. Even after he sold it he was not compelled to give the money to the poor. Ananias tried to appear more generous than he actually was. Peter's words reveal that Ananias was not merely giving money to the poor, but he was giving money to the living God. Peter asked a very important question, what did Satan do to him that Ananias would attempt to deceive the Holy Spirit? While we do not know how Satan deceived Ananias, we know how Satan attempts to deceive us regarding money. For example although Scripture commands and encourages us to give 10% of our income back to God, but many fail to do so. Typically the reason given is that they cannot afford to give 10% of their income away. This is deceit, because God has promised to take care of us. The question is not whether we can afford to obey, but whether we will believe the promise of God. Satan causes us to doubt the goodness of God, therefore we fail to completely obey what God says. In some manner Ananias believed a lie from Satan and then tried to deceive the Holy Spirit. Are there areas in your life in which you are being tempted to hold back from God?

Wednesday, October 19, 2011
Daily theme: The Holy Spirit will deal sooner or later with deception.

Questions
Read Acts 5:5-6
1. What does Ananias' death teach us?
2. Why did great fear come upon the believers?

Consider
The demise of Ananias is a reminder to us of how dependent our lives are upon the sustaining grace of Jesus. To John in Revelation, Jesus reminded him that he holds the keys of death and Hades (Revelation 1:18). Paul reminded the Colossians that in Jesus all things hold together (Colossians 1:17). Ananias forgot his dependence upon Jesus, just as the rich man forgot his relationship to God and began to live only for the things of this world (Luke 12:15-21). The money that he held back from the offering indicated that he had no intention of leaving this life, otherwise he would not have held it back. Ananias forgot that truth and slipped into living as though this life was all there is. Jesus said that he who finds his life will lose it, but he who loses his life for Jesus' sake will find it. Unfortunately it appears that Ananias was trying to hold onto his life and lost it (Matthew 10:39). Ananias' death revealed the great power associated with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It was a serious matter to give your life to Jesus and follow him. When the people heard of Ananias, they would have realized how serious it was to be a part of the church and follow the teaching of the apostles. Perhaps they were being tempted to do what Ananias had done. Furthermore, Ananias' death revealed the great power associated with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Anytime men are confronted with great power, they typically respond in fear. When believers fail to follow the teaching of the apostles, there is the risk that they would be struck down. Such a revelation causes everyone to pause and reflect on the way they are living.

Thursday, October 20, 2011
Daily theme: Agreement with deception and support of it makes us accomplices.

Questions
Read Acts 5:7-11
1. Why did Peter quiz Sapphira?
2. Why did Sapphira lose her life as well?

Consider
It is a bit surprising that Sapphira was not aware of her husband's death. We do not know where Sapphira was while Ananias presented the offering and subsequently lost his life, but three hours passed since Ananias had died. Perhaps someone had gone to find her but failed. When she arrived, Peter desired to ascertain whether Ananias had acted on his own or whether Sapphira had been a willing partner. Her answer to his question would reveal her heart. If she gave the truthful answer to the amount of the proceeds it would be clear that Ananias had acted alone or if Sapphira was aware of his plan, she did not approve. If she maintained the deception, then it was clear that she was involved in the deception. When she responded with the same answer as Ananias, it was clear to Peter that she was guilty as well and would share the same fate. Actually the death of Sapphira is even more shocking than that of Ananias. In the first century the man, either husband or father, held all the power. Women did not have much if any say in decision making. The decision to deceive would have been Ananias' decision. He could have made the decision whether Sapphira agreed or not. Luke tells us that she was fully aware of what Ananias was doing (v. 2). Although Sapphira did not make the decision and did not carry out the decision, she shared the same fate as her husband. In verse 9, Peter identified her guilt. She agreed with Ananias. Her agreement made her just as guilty as if she had carried out the deception herself. When we agree with the sin of another, we enter fully into the guilt, because our heart's intent is to sin. As Jesus demonstrated in the Sermon on the Mount, sin is just as much a matter of the heart as it is action. The case of Sapphira reveals how important it is to maintain a pure heart before God and to cultivate our desire for God and not for the things of this world.

Friday, October 21, 2011
Daily theme: Committed and determined following of Jesus can cause division.

Questions
Read Acts 5:12-13
1. What message was being communicated through signs and wonders?
2. Who were the rest who refused to associate with the apostles?

Consider
Prior to the healing of the lame man, we read of signs and wonders taking place through the apostles (Acts 2:43). Then Peter and John healed the lame man on the