

**“Withholding Nothing”
Acts 4:32-5:16**

Medford High School Transition...

- Story of RHC
 - Springstep (April 2011-August 2013)
 - Boys & Girls Club (Sept 2013 - Sept 2015)
 - Chevalier (Sept 2015 - March 2018)
- Now... Medford High School .
 - Why?
 - Providential movement...
 - City owned and operated by a city commission. As part of the larger effort to revitalize Medford Square, Mayor Burked hired...
 - Blumenreich Presents (Wilbur...) Book on Sundays.
 - Exploring since the beginning of the year. As you might expect, it took us some time to work out the details with the city and the School System, but I am so excited about the timing of this.
 - Why we're excited.
 - The size of theatre creates a more intimate environment to worship together, yet provides room to grow.
 - The large lobby fosters greater opportunities for people to connect.
 - Redemption Kids will be more accessible.
 - Parking is great and setup will be simplified for most of our teams.
 - Strong ties in our community to the HS. Thousands of Medford residents walked the halls of that school for years.
 - Overall, we believe it is going to help people experience the love of God through the message of Jesus and the people of Jesus in an even more effective way. The physical space can help accentuate our strengths as a church, but all of those reasons are not the reasons I am most excited.
 - I'm much more concerned and much more excited about what God is doing in us.
 - Momentum... Summer, Fall, Start of the Year
 - Culture of Prayer (Anybody spend some time on The Mountain this week? Anybody beginning to experience Waves of boldness?) Who's praying with us this weekend (24 Hours!!)
 - Vision 2018...
 - The fullness of God in us overflowing through us.
 - Who can look back over the past eleven weeks (Yes, that takes you back to January 1st, we're 1/5th of the way through the year!) and say: "I may not be where I want to be or where I believe God is taking me, but I am more full of Christ, I am more full of God's Spirit today, than I was just a couple of months ago!"
 - That's how I feel about my own life, and that's how I feel about our church! Oh yes, the best is yet to come!

Timing:

- Pre-Easter... Moving into a great summer of serving our city and continuing to seek God's fullness to the point of overflow.

T: But here's the question of the hour: What will it take to maximize this moment?

Pray like never before. Believe like never before. Take bold steps like never before.

The heart of Christ. The generosity of Jesus!!

Heightened sense of our commitment/devotion to Christ... total surrender. Withholding Nothing.

Context: Acts 4:23-31... Summary Statement - Acts 4:32-36

I. Reflect God's generosity by sharing your possessions.

Church lived like family (*Verse 32*)

- The reason they shared so freely and generously is because of their unity IN CHRIST.
- They became family through Jesus. They were of one heart and one soul, that displayed itself in generosity.
- Two Fundamental Attitudes when it comes to money and material possessions:
 - "what's mine is mine!"
 - "what's mine is yours."
- When two people share Christ, they share the essential foundation for true friendship.
 - Aristotle is reputed to have defined a friend as "one soul dwelling in two bodies."
 - Because you belong to me, my stuff belongs to you.
- Attitude leads to Action:
 - "But had everything in common."
 - Again, as I explained a few weeks ago at the end of chapter 2. This is not a family bank account amongst all Xns in the city. This phrase means they shared their possessions freely with one another, that their attitude "what's mine is yours" translated into action as needs arose.

Positive Example: Barnabus

- The detail Luke gives about Barnabus show us he is an important character in the Book of Acts. His name meant "son of encouragement." Acts 11 describes him as a "good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith."
- We see his goodness, faith, and fullness of the Spirit displayed here.
- One of the surest signs of a persons commitment to anything is their willingness to put their money where their mouth is. (Expound - "we say... nothing is more important. We say - I'll give you anything, Jesus.")

T: Barnabus represents one of many positive examples, but, sadly, that was not the case with everyone.

Negative Example: Ananias & Sapphira

Verse 2 keys us into the issue of the story.

- Like Barnabus, Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, sold a piece of land and voluntarily pledged the full amount, but rather than giving all of what they committed, they "kept back some of the proceeds and brought only part of it."
- "The verb [actually] means *to pilfer or embezzle.*" (Pohill)
- We don't know if he kept back 10% 20% half of the money... it's really irrelevant.
- His sin was that he pretended to give all, to be fully devoted, but his devotion was half-hearted, and half-hearted devotion is not devotion at all.
- When Jesus invites us to follow him, he calls us to surrender everything.

This story teaches us that our generosity is a spiritual issue.

- Verses 35 & 37 says they laid their gifts at the apostles' feet, who represented Jesus. "To lay one's gift at their feet was to offer it to Christ." (Polhill)
- Your financial generosity to the kingdom of God, especially through the local church (the frontline of mission) is first and foremost between you and God.
- Look at verse 3: "Lie to the HS"
 - Spirit is a person
 - Resisted... Greived... Offended... dishonored...
- Verse 4 - The Holy Spirit is God! Obvious from the moment the NT was written, consistent w the apostles teaching which flowed from the teaching of Jesus. "Another Counselor..."
- Verse 9: "test the Spirit of the Lord?"

And as we consider our generosity being a spiritual issue, don't miss the role of Satan and temptation in all of this....

- Verse 3. Satan filled -
 - Temptation in re: to \$\$\$. Peter's reasoning with him shows the depth of planning... Premeditated and presumptuous (psalm 19)
 - Satan loves to tempt people in area of finances.
 - Worry!! Worry about how you're going to pay the bills.
 - I WORKED HARD for that. {P} So you worked hard for you to spend it on you?
 - Don't give to the church... spend... spend on yourself... Save
 - But generosity??!
 - Trust me: You will be tempted to give less than your best. You will be tempted to keep back what God is calling you to give.
- Let's all resolve to take a step forward in our generosity in two ways...
 - To General needs of the church through our regular offerings:
 - No giving > start giving; immature giving > to more mature giving; mature giving > generous giving.
 - \$400k - breakthrough year! Praying for a major surplus this year! For the first time ever!!
 - And.. Let's meet the needs of one another when we see them arise. Don't wait to be asked. I love how this is happening in our church. May it happen all the more!
- Encourage one another in community!!
 - Ananias & Sapphira
 - Marriage = psalm 34:3
 - Go off on marriage, partnership...

Lessons: "Perhaps no passage in Acts raises more serious difficulties for Christian readers. The judgment on these two seems so harsh, so nonredemptive, so out of keeping with the gospel." "If this incident makes us uncomfortable, it should." (Polhill)

- God is concerned about purity...
 - Sin is serious.
 - If our attitude is, oh, God is much nicer now, he wouldn't do that these days.
 - 1) God was nice then! No one deserved the death of Jesus to pay the penalty for their sin. No one deserves God's patience in giving us second, third, and fiftieth chances. He graciously defers judgment and gives us space to come back to him through Jesus!
 - 2) All sin leads to death, it may be slow death, but death it is.

- This was not typical for God. At a pivotal time in the growth of the early church...he wanted to make sure his people understood his holiness. Perhaps he was making a justifiable example of Ananias and Sapphira, because the result was...
 - Great fear came upon all who heard of it (5:5)
 - Great fear came upon the whole church (5:11)
 - When we are exposed to the holiness of God, we should carry a healthy (life-giving) fear of offending his holiness. And it helps us live with a proper fear of God (which doesn't mean we are afraid of him, he is our Father, but that we have this sense of reverent awe and respect because of his infinite worth.
- Understanding the unity and purity god calls us to is not only (don't miss this!) pivotal to the vibrancy of our relationship with him, it is also vital to the vibrancy of our mission with and for him!
 - You wonder why you aren't experiencing God, seeing your desires and love for him grow? It may be because you are not taking him and his standards very seriously with your life.
 - You wonder why you aren't more effective mission? It may be because you are not taking his commands and believing him for his empowerment very seriously in your everyday life.
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II. I. Reflect God's generosity by sharing Christ in word and deed. (RW)

Read 5:12-16

Their generosity was not limited to financial generosity.

Refer back to 4:33 & compare 5:14. What was the primary business of the early church? Witnessing to the resurrection of Jesus!

They did so in conjunction with God performing miraculous healing both physical and spiritual in nature. God was moving "with great power" (*dynamis*, v. 33).

Word & Deeds! They integrate, validate one another...

Growth of the church - V. 14. Finally use the email...

"Double your church in 24 months with this deal." Here's a better plan.

The mission is still in our hands. Breakthrough year totally depends on God and yet, totally depends on us, because we, the church, are his plan A and plan B and plan Z! God has chosen to advance his mission THROUGH US!

MULTIPLY CARD: There is no better time of the year to reach out to those around us.

MHS Transition & Easter: The Mission is in Our Hands

Think about the best invite: Easter, Eggstravaganza, Good Friday.

Options:

1. Share an **invite card**. We're giving you 3 today, but grab 30, grab 300 on your way out the door. Someone may say: I'm inviting my whole workplace, I'm inviting everyone who lives on my hall, I'm inviting everyone in my neighborhood. Grab some invite cards and go to work!!
2. Utilize social media. Specifically, use our **Facebook Events**.

3. Make a personal, **irresistible invites** (personal, meaningful, loving, compelling). REVISIT 2016 Vision Sermon
 - Personal. There is power in personal invitation.
 - I can pass a billboard. I can throw away a flyer. I can scroll past a Facebook ad. The impersonal is easy to ignore, BUT when a person who I know cares about me, looks me in the eye and gives a personal invitation, I have to pause and at least consider.
 - T: Related to this, our invitations will be much stronger, when they are...
 - Meaningful
 - When you invite people, consider them. What might resonate with them? How can I help them see what is in it for them?
 - Show people you've actually considered them, rather than throwing out a generic, shallow invitation.
 - Compelling
 - "Hey, wanna come, bro? I mean if you have nothing else going on and are really bored, this would be a slight upgrade." Ignorable!
 - "Hey, I would love for you to come with me. This is one of the best investments of my time each week, and I believe you'd really like it. In fact, if you don't feel like you benefit from the experience, I wouldn't expect you to come back." Much more difficult to resist.
 - If you lack passion, people will probably not be compelled.
 - There is nothing more compelling than when people can see what God is doing in you! When they see the overflow of God's work changing the way you work, changing the way you handle stress, they will take notice!
 - CONNECT WITH GOOD DEEDS?
4. **Be creative**. My plan: make a video with what I hope is an irresistible invite.. Send it to a list of people I care about. Add a short personal note. And pray like crazy.

There is no better time of the year to reach out to those around us with an invitation or an introduction to the story of Jesus. RESOURCE TABLE IS LOADED TODAY... Wipe us out! I'd love to see it!

Who is the one person you will get the gospel in their hands over the next couple of weeks?
 Who are the 2, the 5, the 10, the 20, the 50 people you are going to invite to join us during this Easter season.

Don't keep that love back. Don't hold back what you have received? What are we withholding?
 NOTHING!!! "Freely you have received, freely give!" (Matthew 10:8)

Gospel...

- If this is motivated by my words, it will last for a few weeks. If it is motivated by the reality of Jesus, it will go on and on.
- If this is motivated by an event (like Easter), it will last for a few days. You might muster up the courage, even in your own strength to invite a few friends (and I hope you do!), but what I'm really praying for is that your love is motivated by God's love in Christ and your sharing Jesus with those around you will go on and on past Easter, past April and May and the summer months, into a lifestyle of boldness for the sake of the name of Jesus.

2 cor 8:9

2 cor 5:14

Conclusion:

The Point: Withhold nothing in your devotion to Jesus, his church and his mission.

Surrender... St Patrick's Prayer...

Christ. Christ. Christ. Christ. Christ. Christ. In CHRIST. IN Christ. Christ is everything. Jesus you are all to us!

What do you need to lay at the feet of Jesus? What do you need to turn over? Your wealth? Your pride? Your fears (boldness)?

Prayer Team... (Time of Surrender - Time of Withholding Nothing!!)

HOW - PRAYER??