

Union Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **The Acts of the Holy Spirit, Part 4: Grieve Not the Holy Spirit**

July 9th, 2023. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Acts 4:32-5:11; Matthew 11:25-30**

1. Recall: The Work of the Holy Spirit - Inside and Upon Us

On May 28th, we covered in some depth who the Holy Spirit is, and His work in and upon us. I strongly urge you to please go back to our website (unionmcmc.com) and review that sermon and sermon notes. A couple of points from that sermon I would like to emphasize again this morning.

- The Holy Spirit working In Us.

Isaiah prophesied this about Jesus:

"A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. **2The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him [ANOINTING], the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.**" Isaiah 11:1-2 NRSV

The Holy Spirit is here described as:

- The spirit of the Lord - **God's spirit**
- The spirit of **wisdom**
- The spirit of **understanding**
- The spirit of **knowledge** and **might** (energy, strength, power, ...)
- The spirit of **counsel (guidance)**, and **the fear of the Lord (reverence)**

Wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, and reverence within us come about through the Holy Spirit working IN us.

- The Holy Spirit Upon Us

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 NRSV

The Holy Spirit upon us gives us the power/ability to be witnesses for Christ.

In today's scripture story from Acts 5 we see the Holy Spirit revealing what was in the hearts of two people who showed immense irreverence to God with their dishonest actions, and the immediate judgement that followed.

2. Sinning Against the Holy Spirit: Ananias & Sapphira

○ Context - Life Together in the Christian Family

Acts 4:32-37 describes Christians living and sharing in unity in the early Church. We see some very important points summarized here for us:

a. Unity, Mutual Love & Generosity

32All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but **they shared everything they had.**

b. Great Power and Grace

"With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all 34that there were no needy persons among them." Acts 4:33-34 NIV

c. Freewill & Sacrificial Giving in Love

"For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales 35and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need." Acts 4:34-35 NIV

○ Sin of Ananias & Sapphira

"Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. **2With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.**" Acts 5:1-2 NIV

In the middle of this great work of God and unity in the church, there was temptation and Ananias and Sapphira yielded to that temptation.

Clearly, the husband and wife showed,

- **Intent** (to lie and deceive)
- **Pre-meditation** (it was pre-planned)
- **Concealment** (lying and deception to cover up the truth)
- **Conspiracy** (they conspired to deceive)

○ **Spiritual Discernment (Knowledge, Understanding, ...)**

"Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God." Acts 5:3-4 NIV

a. How did Peter know?

The Holy Spirit revealed this to him.

Remember, He is the Spirit of knowledge, understanding, reverence, ...

Note: This is not suspicion. What Peter knew was revealed to him.

Important to note that in this period of great outpouring of grace and blessing,

- **the Spirit of God was present** (with divine power and grace to bless)
- **Satan was also present** (as Jesus said in John 10:10, to steal, kill, destroy the love and unity of God's people, disrupt God's work, ...)

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. 9Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world." 1 Peter 5:7 NKJV

'Submit yourselves therefore to God.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7 NRSV

b. What did Ananias and Sapphira do wrong?

Yield to the temptation of Satan and lie - not only to humans (as they seemed to think they were doing) but to God, the Holy Spirit.

• **Swift Judgement**

In this case divine judgement was swift.

"When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died...

7About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price."

9Peter said to her, "How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also."

10At that moment she fell down at his feet and died..." Acts 5:5, 7-10 NIV

In the midst of the Holy Spirit's strong presence with grace and power, they were very irreverent. They did not fear (revere) the Lord. In the words of Isaiah 11, **the Spirit of God is the Spirit of the fear of the Lord (reverence)**. In other words, the Holy Spirit does not tolerate irreverence for God.

- **God Does Not Tolerate Sin**

We must never forget that God cannot tolerate sin.

When the Israelites turned God's blessing of wealth into a golden calf that they worshipped, God was so angry that:

"The Lord said to Moses, "Go, leave this place, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, and go to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your descendants I will give it.' 2I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, ... 3Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; **but I will not go up among you, or I would consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.**"

Exodus 33:1-3 NRSV

So, Moses had to plead and intercede for Israel and God relented:

"Now if I have found favor in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." **14He [God] said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."** 15And he [Moses] said to him, "If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here. 16For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth."

Exodus 33:13-16 NRSV

God is gracious and patient with us.
But we must never take the Lord for granted.
We must never forget the "Holy" in Holy Spirit.
Irreverence deeply offends the Holy Spirit. Remember the 2nd of the 10 commandments - we must not take the Lord's name in vain.

3. Grieve Not the Holy Spirit

- **What It Is to Grieve the Spirit**

Paul says much about this in Ephesians 4.

We see much of what describes here in the story of Ananias and Sapphira:

"Putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another.

26Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

27and do not make room for the devil.

28Thieves must **give up stealing**; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy.

29Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

30And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption.

31Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, 32and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you"

Ephesians 4:25-31 NRSV

- **The Lord's Yoke is Easy, His Burden is Light**

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. 29Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Matthew 11:28-30 NRSV

"In fact, **this is love for God: to keep his commands.**

And his commands are not burdensome" 1 John 5:3 NIV