

Sermon Title: **“Called and Assembled”**

Sermon Series: Acts: Kingdom Vision 20/20

Text: **Acts 5:12-42**

Speaker: Pastor Damian Mericka

I. Introduction: The early church is still somewhat in a state of shock at the swift judgment of God against Ananias and Sapphira. In a wave of self-examination, believers came to understand that God has not changed. He is Holy and calls us to be Holy as well. God desires a pure Bride for His Son.

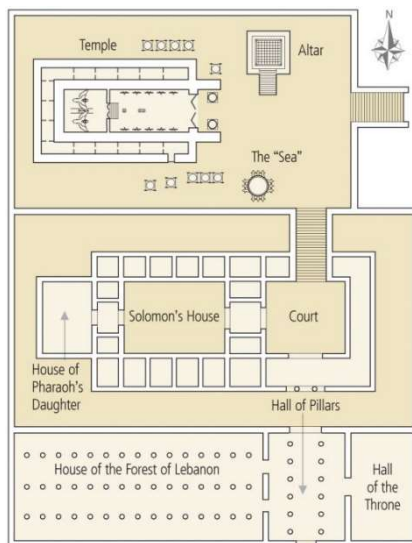
“For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.” -2 Corinthians 11:2-3

While many would see this as counterproductive in spreading the Gospel or growing the church, we will see today that it did the opposite of that. Sure, there was a sense of weeding those who were not genuine or serious about Jesus. However, for those whose hearts were becoming awakened by the Spirit through the church’s *proclamation* and *demonstration* of the Gospel, no power on earth could stop them from coming to Christ!

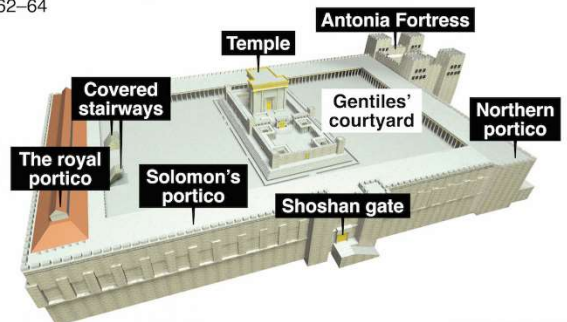
Going Deeper: 1) Have you ever felt ashamed to talk about the Law or sin when discussing Jesus with others? If so, why? While we may not be at a place of suffering for our faith in Jesus, our personal struggle to present the whole Gospel for fear of rejection can bring an internal suffering God does not want us to have. Our fear of rejection causes us to fall short of sharing the Gospel, which can never be Good News to those God has placed in our lives.

II. “The Gathering Church” (Acts 5:11-12)

The Greek word for church is *ekklesia* which means the *assembling of those called out*. The early church was not defined by a building, but the actual *assembling* of believers together (Acts 4:32). So far this assembling together took place in a portion of the Temple called Solomon’s Portico.



Herod’s Temple on the Temple Mount
Circa AD 62–64



In Solomon's day this Court was for the gathering of any who needed to have cases heard for judgment to come. In Herod's day it became the gathering place for everyday worship not requiring sacrifice. Adjacent to this was the court of Women; not because it was exclusive for women, but women could not proceed further.

It was here Jesus gave a stirring message that is echoed in the Pentecost event and continual church worship in Acts.

See **John 10:22-39**. During the time Israel celebrated the rededication of their Temple, Jesus was pressed on whether or not He was the long-awaited Messiah. Jesus said His message was affirmed with works (*signs & wonders*) yet they persisted in unbelief. However, those who hear His voice (*called out ones*) will follow Him (*assemble*). **Jesus challenged them to discern if this is of God or not. <- Hold on to that, it will come up again soon!**

In the same breath we find the Apostles gathered in this same court as Jesus, proclaiming and demonstrating the Gospel – *and for the first time in the Acts account women are including in the numbers with the men!* (**Acts 5:14**)

Even with the mounting persecution, the Gospel of atonement for sin, and the swift present judgment of God to keep His Son's Bride pure- the church is growing! **Why? Because those who are coming out and assembling have been called by the voice of the Good Shephard, Jesus Christ!**

Going Deeper: 2) *What is significant of where the early church is gathering? What, as noted in the sermon took place there before our text of Acts 5? What does the word **church** mean? Can you be the **assembly** without **gathering**? How does this understanding affect your attitude toward weekly Sunday worship? How does this affect your understanding now of Hebrews 10:25?*

III. "Signs and Wonders" (Acts 5:12-16)

God was answering the Church's prayer in Acts **4:23-31** for both the boldness to proclaim the Gospel along with demonstration of God's power in the Name of Jesus. By the hands of the Apostles God was bringing signs and wonders among the people.

But what are these *signs and wonders*? The Bible does not leave us to speculate- while all are done in Jesus' Name, they draw the gaze of observers to the Person of Christ! You will remember Peter's Inaugural sermon where he quotes from the Prophet Joel (**Acts 2:17-21**). But to help our study today I want to actually go back to **Joel 2:28-3:3**.

What was happening in Joel's day served as a shadow of a later, greater context in which God would pour down His wrath in *the great and awesome day of the Lord* (Joel 2:31). The wrath that would fall upon the nations is forth coming; a countdown that began with Jesus' Ascension (**Acts 1:6-8**) and will come like a thief in the night (**1 Thessalonians 5:1-11**).

Signs and wonders came as a result of Christ's *First Coming* and labor to point toward Christ's *Second Coming*!

In this context they were to direct the attention of the Jewish crowd to the faithful promises of God being fulfilled in their day. They also served to confirm the Apostle's claim to be God's Messengers bringing authority to their message, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is an exciting, explosive time for the Church! **Note: Acts 19:11-12**. While this was happening, we along with the early church must not get lost in the demonstration and neglect the proclamation of the Gospel! **See Mark 1:35-39**.

Going Deeper: 3) *How do signs and wonders tie in with the focus of Jesus' Second Coming? Was the demonstration of the Gospel any more important than the proclamation portion? How do we see this balanced in Jesus? Is there a sense of urgency in your witness, seeing how the sins prevalent before God's judgment are also prevalent in our Nation and world today? Do the Apostles words in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 stir you to live for Jesus today?*

IV. "Obeying God or Man?" (Acts 5:17-32)

As the Pharisees were to Jesus, so the Sadducees were becoming for the Apostles. The instrument of this world to bring resistance and persecution to the work of Gospel Ministry. The Sadducees were a very politically driven group of people. Rome saw the value of controlling culture through their religions; the Sadducees were the reach of Rome into Jewish life.

Control the Temple; control the people.

The High Priest along with the Sadducees see the threat the Church was becoming and were jealous for their way of life. They took the Apostles and threw them in prison. God then delivered them through an angel (whom the Sadducees did not believe in the existence of) and directed them to resume the proclamation of the Gospel!

The next day, as the High Priest and Sadducees gather council it is discovered the Apostles are not in the prison. In fact, they are out in the Temple preaching the Name of Jesus! Bringing the Twelve into the council's presence Peter affirms their devotion is to God above man.

Going Deeper: 4) *Why were the religious leaders upset with the Apostles? What is significant of God rescuing them from prison by an angel? What was Peter's response to the High Priest when asked why they were disobeying their leaders? How does fear of persecution affect your witness of Jesus? Is your life one that aligns with verses 29-32?*

V. “Is This of God?” (Acts 5:33-42)

The words of the Pharisee Gamaliel echo the challenge Jesus spoke to them to determine whether His message and work were of God. Gamaliel advises the leadership in the present council to cautiously step back and watch what will come because of their message. **If it is not of God, it will come to nothing. But if it is, we would be fighting against God Himself and loose in a fight against them.**

After beating the Apostles (most likely flogging see **Deuteronomy 25:3**), they released them. Hoping this would discourage them and reinforce the direction to stop spreading the Gospel, it in fact did the opposite.

The Apostles would continue both in the corporate assembling in the Temple and in the homes, Jesus continued to be preached!

There are many reasons why being the Body, *called* and *assembled*, is inconvenient to people today. Reasons that we empower- whether through fear, pride, bitterness, pain, suffering, sadness / grief- what ever the reason is we must ask the question if our decision is being obedient to Jesus.

May the value of this world loose its attraction as we continue to follow Jesus’ voice out of the kingdom we once knew, loved, and lived in. May the growing light of Himself and His Kingdom transform us as we gather to worship Him, learning and growing.

May our life for Jesus, as did the early church, bring cautious *observation* for those watching, *persecution* from those rejecting, and *celebration* alongside those repenting and receiving!

May our worship of Jesus be who we are every moment of every day!

Going Deeper: 5) *Suffering comes on many levels for each of us. What are some ways in which you have suffered for Jesus? As persecution continues to intensify, how did the early Church find the strength to stay the course? How are you preparing yourself and your loved ones to suffer for the Name of Jesus? Is the life you have with Jesus right now worth suffering for?*

Why do you love Jesus?