

06.23.24
Speaking Jesus Sermon Notes
At the Council, Again
Acts 5:17-42

6 Pillars of this sermon series

1. We Speak Jesus Because God is The God Who Speaks
2. Jesus Told People Who He IS
3. Jesus Charged All Who Followed Him To Speak
4. Speaking & Doing Go Hand In Hand
5. It's Always Right To Say Something About Jesus
6. If You Can't Explain it, You Don't Get It.

There are three distinct sections in Acts 5...

- Acts 5:1-11→ Ananias & Sapphira lie to God about the money they were giving to the church and they fell dead.
- Acts 5:12-16 → The many healings & deliverances of the Apostles and their high reputation among Jerusalem.
- Acts 17-42→ The Apostles are arrested (again) and brought before the Council.

Sermon's Three Section

1. Purpose for Freedom
2. Fear of The Lord
3. Urgency in Sharing Jesus

Today I want to continue to look at the Fear of the Lord & Urgency in Sharing Jesus (Gamaliel's response).

Fear of the Lord

Reading through Acts 5 is interesting when you realize that one of the clearest ways the Spirit is telling the story is through the description of feelings. What are people feeling and who is feeling those emotions? There is a strong contrast happening between God's community and the religious leaders. Let me outline what we see the religious leaders feel in this chapter...

- They were "Jealous" in verse 17 which is what caused them to arrest the apostles again.
- They were "greatly Perplexed" in verse 24 when the apostles were not in their jail cell.
- They were "Afraid of being stone by the people" in verse 26 when they took the apostles without force.
- They were "Enraged" at the apostles and wanted to kill them in verse 33.

Now, let's take a look at what God's community feels throughout this chapter.

- They felt a "Great Fear" when Ananias fell dead in verse 5.
- They felt a "Great Fear" when Sapphira fell dead in front of them in verse 11.
- They "Rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name" in verse 41 when they were beaten.

It is clear that the story is being told through this lens. The religious leaders are jealous, perplexed and afraid of the people. They never have peace. They never go to God. They never seem to be collected or grounded. Whereas the believers (the apostles and those who were present when Ananias and Sapphira died) are filled with really appropriate emotions. I share this because it is only God's community that is exhibiting any sense of Fearing the Lord and I want to sharing some thoughts around this. The religious leaders are only afraid of the people, but God's community fears God.

The Fear of the Lord is not the same as living afraid of God. The Fear of the Lord is in the end, always constructive and loving. When we experience God's immensity it is appropriate to be afraid but God doesn't leave us in terror, he brings us to awe. Here are some examples of people who were used by God who experienced this type of fear. Note that all these people were used by him in mighty ways...

- Mose hides his face when he sees the Burning Bush in Exodus 3:6
 - 6 And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And ***Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.***
- The Israelites were afraid when they were at Mount Sinai in Exodus 20:18-19.
 - 18 Now when all the people saw the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking, ***the people were afraid and trembled,*** and they stood far off 19 and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die."
- Gideon was afraid in Judges 6:22-23 when he sees the angel of the Lord.
 - 22 Then Gideon perceived that he was the angel of the Lord. And Gideon said, "Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face." 23 But the Lord said to him, "Peace be to you. ***Do not fear,*** you shall not die."
- Isaiah expresses his sense of unworthiness in Isaiah 6:4-5 when God gives him a vision.
 - 4 And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. 5 And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!"
- Even Peter, James and John when Jesus was transfigured before them in Matthew 17:5-6
 - 6 When the disciples heard this, ***they fell on their faces and were terrified.*** 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear."

God's immensity, holiness, perfection, and might are indeed terrifying, but He does not want us to remain in fear. All the people who encountered God experienced a definite terror, yet God did not leave them in that state. The Fear of the Lord is constructive and not permanently debilitating. I disagree with only emphasizing God's love, mercy, and gentleness without acknowledging that He is also worthy of our awe and fear. He is the only one who can balance perfect love and perfect fear. It is good to fear Him because God Himself does not leave us in fear.

Here's the list (Doesn't this seem to describe the apostles in these chapters of Acts that we have been reading? The Spirit has changed them dramatically!)...

The Fear of the Lord is at least these things...

1. Reverence and Awe

- God is Holy. This means He is fundamentally different from us and this difference causes us to be in awe of Him, the only being who is perfect. We should always hold a sense of awe towards God. While it is important to recognize that God is close and intimate with us, we must not diminish His majesty. He truly embodies the meaning of the word 'Awesome.'
- Proverbs 9:10
 - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.
- Isaiah 6:1-5: Isaiah's vision of God emphasizes awe and reverence, where even the seraphim cover their faces in God's presence.

2. Obedience and Devotion

- The only appropriate response to God's holiness is obedience and devotion. While he knows that I am small and that I sin, responding to what he says is still always what is most righteous. Those who fear him have their mind to obey him in every circumstance. Though we sin the fear of the Lord eliminates the excuses we give ourselves.
- Deuteronomy 6:2
 - That you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.
- Ecclesiastes 12:13
 - The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

3. Acknowledgment of God's Power and Justice

- People who have personally experienced God have seen a measure of his might. The fear of Lord acknowledges that no one stands up to him. People who mock God will at some point see his might. His justice will have the last word in this world.
- Psalm 33:8-9
 - 8 Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! 9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.
- Hebrews 12:28-29
 - 28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

4. Beginning of Wisdom and Knowledge

- God is clear throughout the Bible that his ways are not our ways. Though he has given us considerable intellect and creative capabilities we are not the final arbiters of ultimate truth. All we have to do to understand this is to look at our society and see how many truth claims are being challenged in our days. If morality and reality change so easily around our whims we would be in trouble.
- Proverbs 1:7
 - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

- Psalm 111:10
 - The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever!

5. Trust and Security

- Think through this honestly→ What do you think keeps you safe? Yourself? A Gun? Your spouse? Your Family? Your bank account? Your ability to work hard? Your retirement account? Having the right President in office? Having the right breakdown of justices? Sheer luck & probability? Karma? Or is all your trust & security founded on the person of God? Only you know when you're being honest with questions like these?
- Proverbs 14:26
 - In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.
- Psalm 115:11
 - You who fear the Lord, trust in the Lord! He is their help and their shield.

6. Hatred of Evil

- This one might be the sneakiest one of this list because on face value we may all agree with this right away without knowing how much evil we tolerate and celebrate. Do we hate what God says he hates? Do we know what He says he hates? Do we champion undoing any of those evils?
- Proverbs 8:13
 - The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.
- Proverbs 16:6
 - By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.
- Proverbs 6:16-19
 - 16 There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, 19 a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.
- Proverbs 11:1
- Proverbs 15:8
- Proverbs 15:9
- Zechariah 8:17

7. Life and Blessings

- Just like the apostles who rejoiced after being beaten (Acts 5:41), those who fear the Lord are the ones most able to truly enjoy life. We often try to convince ourselves that we are happy and that life is good, but this isn't something we can fake. The fear of the Lord actually teaches us the beauty of life. When we accept how holy and great God is, our hearts learn how much He truly loves and cares for our every need.
- Proverbs 19:23
 - The fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.
- Psalm 128:1

- Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!

8. God's Delight in Those Who Fear Him

- Unsurprisingly, when people are truly humbled by fearing God, God turns his affection towards them. God revealed himself to us as Father intentionally. He loves us and those who have learned to really revere him, receive his love. I love it when Ryan, my son, shows me respect. It opens our relationship and it allows me to shower him with even more love because I know he's showing me that he is understanding the depth of what our relationship is meant to be. I think God does this wholly more perfectly than I could ever do.
- Psalm 147:11
 - but the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear him, in those who hope in his steadfast love.
- Isaiah 66:2
 - All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

Summary

The Biblical "Fear of the Lord" is a profound respect and reverence for God, which leads to wisdom, obedience, and a righteous life. It acknowledges God's power, justice, and mercy, prompting believers to live in a way that honors Him and avoids evil. This fear is not about being terrified but about recognizing God's greatness and living in a way that reflects that understanding.

Urgency in Sharing Jesus

This is already pretty long but I wanted to share a few words about Gamaliel. In the sermon I looked at Gamaliel's response during the council meeting and I talked about how at first his advice seemed like a good, level headed response. At face value, what he says seems like a reasonable choice for the council to take but I wanted to say that I don't respect this approach and I do not think that this should frame our responses to God. I shared two reasons why...

1. Now is always the right moment to respond to Jesus.
 - Gamaliel's response seems wise because he says that they might be able to discern if God is in the apostle's movement through its ability to hold its success over time. This is unwise first because God is not discerned through human definitions of "success."
 - i. (This is not part of my point but I can't keep my mouth shut here. I mean, God's ultimate redemptive plan was to die for us and remain dead for three days. None of us (obviously including these men) would deem that a successful plan. All the apostles but 1 are killed for the gospel and yet God is always with them. There is no success that they I think they would agree with when it comes to God's movement)
 - But really my point here is that it is unwise to have a wait and see approach with God because tomorrow is never promised to us. If you wait and see you might

run out of the waiting and then there's no more time to see. God is the only one who is out of time in this equation. He has all the time in the world!

i. Proverbs 27:1

- Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.

ii. James 4:13-15

- 13 Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"— 14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

a. If you wait for tomorrow, tomorrow might not come and opportunities might run out.

iii. Luke 12:20 (this is a parable)

- 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'

2. God has provided the world with sufficient evidence and information for people to make an informed decision about Him.

- Luke 16:19-31- The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is perhaps one of Jesus' most unique sounding stories. It has many applications but one of the most important is found in Abraham's response to the Rich man when he asks Abraham to send Lazarus to tell his family to believe. Abraham says...
 - i. 'If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'
- God has given the world what he deems to be enough revelation for us to believe in him. Gamaliel's response is invalid because all the evidence was right there, in their face, and they did not believe it. Let's look at what they had to consider...
 - i. They had Jesus in their lifetime and yet they murdered him.
 - ii. They had all the miracles, healings, deliverances that Jesus and now the apostles were carrying out and yet it wasn't enough.
 - iii. They had the apostle's teachings and they ignored them.
 - They had enough to already see God in this movement and they largely closed their eyes.

It would be unwise for us to live our lives following Gamaliel's reasoning. When you hear someone say this to you, ask them questions to find out what they are waiting for and think about a way to respond to that lack of urgency. It is always the right time to say something meaningful about Jesus because he is the living water that all people are thirsty for.

I wrote a lot and so I'll say to anyone who has read this entire note→ Thank you for your investment. I am proud of your hunger for more and I hope we are adequately feeding you. Even if only one person reads my blabber here, it is worth it. Most are not hungry and I am proud that you are. And also, sorry for any grammatical errors.