



ACTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA
ACTS 5:1-11
04-11-21

All = bold sections – read together

Leader = regular font – leader reads (choose or rotate leaders)

Sung together = italics

NOTE: Please have a white candle ready to light.

Affirmation #5

Because **the formation of authentic Biblical community is the intricate, patient work of the Holy Spirit**, when interpersonal problems arise (and they always do) we will navigate those with love. We will not be satisfied with just another club or social group meeting. We will work to develop the deep, life giving community that is only available through the giving of ourselves to each other through the Holy Spirit.

Welcome

Good morning! Welcome to Community CRC's weekly corporate worship time. We are pleased to be worshipping with you today and look forward to seeing you again at the sanctuary in the near future. You are loved, missed and needed.

May the love and joy of the Father, the grace and peace of the Son and the courage and comfort of the Holy Spirit be ours in abundance today!

Call to Worship – Psalm 62 -- TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO JEDUTHUN. A PSALM OF DAVID.

It may feel like we have been battered for a very long time now given the situations we have faced over the last year. Yet, in the midst of it all – God remains our rock and salvation – alone! There is no other. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone according to Scripture alone and to the glory of God alone. Note the vices towards the end of this Psalm that we may be tempted by to lure us from our Rock and our Salvation.

For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation. He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be greatly shaken.

How long will all of you attack a man to batter him, like a leaning wall, a tottering fence? They only plan to thrust him down from his high position. They take pleasure in falsehood. They bless with their mouths, but inwardly they curse.

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

Those of low estate are but a breath; those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath.

Put no trust in extortion; set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, set not your heart on them.



Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For you will render to a man according to his work.

Song – Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SHuCOiOms8w>

*Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee,
Opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day!*

*All Thy works with joy surround Thee,
Earth and heaven reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee,
Center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
Flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Singing bird and flowing fountain,
Call us to rejoice in Thee.*

*Thou art giving and forgiving,
Ever blessing, ever blessed,
Wellspring of the joy of living,
Ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother,
All who live in love are Thine;
Teach us how to love each other,
lift us to the joy divine.*

Song – Praise To The Lord Almighty -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J79tiOt6Sjk>

*Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
The King of creation
O my soul, praise Him
For He is thy health and salvation
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near
Praise Him in glad adoration*

*Praise to the Lord
Who o'er all things so wonderfully reigneth
Shelters thee under His wings
Yea, so gently sustaineth
Hast thou not seen how thy desires e'er have been
Granted in what He ordaineth
Praise to the Lord, O let all that is in me adore Him*



*All that hath life and breath
Come now with praises before Him
Let the 'amen' sound from His people again
Gladly for aye we adore Him*

Christ Candle – Turkey

We light the Christ candle as a visible sign of God's presence with us; that he has come as light into a world of darkness. We light the Christ candle to remind ourselves that Jesus is the light and that in him we become light too. We are never a light on our own. The light we have and can offer to others is the light of Jesus of Nazareth. May we be God's light in 2021.

Jesus of Nazareth said that to be a Christian means to be maltreated for his name's sake (Matthew 5:11) and the apostle Paul said that "everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). Mistreatment as a disciple of Jesus is not a matter of *if* but a matter of *when* and a matter of *degree*. Hope is a vital aspect of being a disciple of Jesus. This is especially true under heavy persecution. In America, the land of religious freedom, we have it pretty easy in that there is minimal outright persecution against Christians. **May we make the most of our religious freedom to honor Christ and give credible and coherent witness to him! At the same time, may we be aware of our brothers and sisters in Christ around the world who don't share the same freedom that we do. The 36th place that is most challenging to be a disciple of Jesus Christ is Turkey.**

Of the 83 million people who call Turkey home, only 173 thousand are Christians (0.2%) In Turkey, the main religion, Islam, is enmeshed with fierce, fanatical nationalism. Following an attempted coup in July 2016, the country remains in a tense situation. Fierce rhetoric from the government has left less space for other voices, including the Christian church – the general opinion is that a true Turk is Muslim. Often pressured to return to Islam, Christian converts experience the greatest persecution from family, friends and community. Overall, suspicion toward Christians is increasing in Turkey.

Prayer Points: Please pray with persecuted Christians who face an increasing bias against their faith. Pray that they would not give up meeting together and study the Word. Pray with believers as they look for relevant ways to share their faith with their Muslim friends and family. Ask God to give them discernment and words to minister graciously and wisely. Pray with church leaders for wisdom and boldness as they minister to their congregations and look for opportunities to plant churches.

Jesus is the Light. We are a light. Shine His light!

Light the Christ candle at this time

Song – Yet Not I But Through Christ In Me -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zundjUFazfg>

*What gift of grace is Jesus my redeemer
There is no more for heaven now to give
He is my joy, my righteousness, and freedom
My steadfast love, my deep and boundless peace
To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
For my life is wholly bound to His
Oh how strange and divine, I can sing: all is mine!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me*



*The night is dark but I am not forsaken
For by my side, the Savior He will stay
I labor on in weakness and rejoicing
For in my need, His power is displayed
To this I hold, my Shepherd will defend me
Through the deepest valley He will lead
Oh the night has been won, and I shall overcome!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me
No fate I dread, I know I am forgiven
The future sure, the price it has been paid
For Jesus bled and suffered for my pardon
And He was raised to overthrow the grave
To this I hold, my sin has been defeated
Jesus now and ever is my plea
Oh the chains are released, I can sing: I am free!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me
With every breath I long to follow Jesus
For He has said that He will bring me home
And day by day I know He will renew me
Until I stand with joy before the throne
To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!
To this I hold, my hope is only Jesus
All the glory evermore to Him
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!
When the race is complete, still my lips shall repeat
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!
Yet not I, but through Christ in me!*

Song – Grace -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lgx7cCK29yM>

*Your grace that leads this sinner home
From death to life forever
And sings the song of righteousness
By blood and not by merit
Your grace that reaches far and wide
To every tribe and nation
Has called my heart to enter in
The joy of Your salvation*



*By grace I am redeemed
By grace I am restored
And now I freely walk
Into the arms of Christ my Lord
Your grace that I cannot explain
Not by my earthly wisdom
The Prince of life, without a stain
Was traded for this sinner
By grace I am redeemed
By grace I am restored
And now I freely walk
Into the arms of Christ my Lord
Let praise rise up and overflow
My song resound forever
For grace will see me welcomed home
To walk beside my Savior
By grace I am redeemed
By grace I am restored
And now I freely walk
Into the arms of Christ my Lord
By grace I am redeemed
By grace I am restored
And now I freely walk
Into the arms of Christ my Lord*

Centering Prayer – LORD’S DAY 32 -- Question 86

I invite you to read the Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A #76 below, reflect on its meaning. Then offer a prayer of confession regarding how you (and I and we) fall short and a prayer of supplication, asking for greater wisdom and discernment and awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide you in the way of Love and mercy and truth and grace.

Q. Since then we are delivered from our misery, merely of grace, through Christ, without any merit of ours, why must we still do good works?

A. Because Christ, having redeemed and delivered us by his blood, also renews us by his Holy Spirit, after his own image; that so we may testify, by the whole of our conduct, our gratitude to God for his blessings,^a and that he may be praised by us;^b also, that every one may be assured in himself of his faith,^c by the fruits thereof; and that, by our godly conversation others may be gained to Christ.^d

^a a Rom. 6:13; Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9, 10; 1 Cor. 6:20.

^b b Matt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:6, 7.

^c c 2 Pet. 1:10; Matt. 7:17; Gal. 5:6, 22, 23.

^d d 1 Pet. 3:1, 2; Rom. 14:19.



Offering – Resonate Global Mission

Resonate Global Mission (Home Missions and World Missions combined in 2017 to create this new agency) is a missions agency established by the Christian Reformed Church. Resonate has helped the church's congregations take part in fulfilling the Great Commission for more than 125 years. The work of Missionaries has grown the global Church in amazing ways. Resonate continues to do its part both in North America and around the world by sending missionaries, planting churches, developing missional leaders and changing lives in Christ.

Prayer: Bless now, O Lord, this gift and its benefits, that it might be received as evidence of your mercies, and multiplied in effectiveness for your kingdom. Through this and other acts of giving, train my heart towards a greater generosity, that the habits of my stewardship might be ever more pleasing to you, and ever more expressive of your own holy heart and passions.

All that I have is yours, Lord Christ.

All that I have is yours.

Use then this small gift
for works of love and mercy,
and unto the increase of your glory. Amen.

We remember that giving is an act of faith, a practice of hope and an expression of love.

(You can give by sending your offering to the church, P.O. Box 217, Oakdale Ca 95361 or consider giving online through your bank. Our deacons can help you with this if necessary.)

Scripture Reading – Acts 5:1-11

We jump back into our series from the book of Acts entitled, Acts of the Holy Spirit after three messages for Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter from the book of Luke. In chapter four we saw Peter and John miraculously heal a crippled man of more than 40 years through the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This drew a crowd in the temple courts and the religious Jews became jealous and threw Peter and John in jail overnight. When they realized the next morning that they had nothing on them to hold them in jail, they verbally abused and bullied them – telling them not to speak of the name of Jesus again. Of course, they refuse to listen to jealous religious leaders and instead listen to God. They go back to the Christian community and Luke, for the second time describes how unified they were – even selling property to give to those who were in need. These needy folks were likely many of the recently converted Jews that had been in Jerusalem for the Passover festival and now have decided to stay and live in Jerusalem with the many other disciples like them. At center point of this description of generous unity is a man who is nicknamed Barnabas, which means son of encouragement who has sold property and given all the proceeds to the new community to use for those in need. Chapter 5, verses 1-11 are an utterly shocking contrast to this unity and generosity. And the first word of chapter five should tip us off to that.

With this in mind, please read Luke 24:1-12



Gospel Message – Ananias & Sapphira

Woe! Okay, let's get the elephant in the room out of the way from the beginning. This is a shocking and hard to wrap our head around event. It seems so un-Christlike. Right? Can you picture Jesus in Peter's shoes? Where is the mercy? Where is the grace? Where is the opportunity for repentance and reconciliation? Let's admit it – this is not a primary text on how to do pastoral care! Can you imagine: Having people drop dead at your feet because of their sin is not exactly going to inspire much confidence in your pastoral sensitivities! So, what is going on here? Simply this – a statement is being made by God to the new community of Christians. Sin is serious. There will be consequences. If not dealt with by Jesus on the cross and lived out through lives of humble and generous and honest living then at the end times when Jesus will come to judge the living and the dead. Either way, judgement of sin happens. Okay – let's back up and re-enter this passage again now that the elephant is out.

It is one of the oldest and most famous of all war tricks – well over 3000 years old. The Greeks had been laying siege to the city of Troy for ten years without any success in defeating it. In a brilliant ploy, the army retreated from Troy, leaving behind a large wooden horse as a gift to the city of Troy. The wooden horse was received and brought into the city through the fortified wall and gate. At night, while the city slept, warriors who had been hidden in the hollow wooden horse snuck out, killed the guards of the gate, opened the gate and let the Greek army who faked a retreat but came back hidden, in. The city was quickly overtaken by the Greeks. The city of Troy had fallen by the deception of the Trojan Horse! Today, a trojan horse is any malware that misleads users of its true intent. Now or then, the trojan horse uses something that seems good to hide that which was not (at least to the Trojans). In the same way, Ananias and Sapphira use the trojan horse of generosity to hide their sin of greed and pride with lying. How easy it is to look good, but be not.

Barnabas had just been set up as the example of what some members of the very large community of Christians were doing – selling some of their property and giving the proceeds to the apostles to use for those in need. Now, its important to once again point out that all this was completely voluntary. Luke makes it clear that it was their property and their money and that they could do with it what they wanted. They were not being forced to give under some kind of rule or law. They choose to give. However, Ananias and Sapphira also chose to lie by feigning as if they had given the whole amount to the community. They did not. They held some back for themselves. Well, what's wrong with that? Nothing in itself except that it is implied that they said they were giving all the proceeds when they really were not. That's the problem. They lied and they deceived. If they would have said, "Peter, we sold our property for \$10,000 dollars and we are going to give half of it to the church and keep the other half for ourselves, they would have been fine. But they didn't. They secretly kept a portion for themselves while attempting to make others believe they had given all the proceeds of the sale. Why would they do this?

Well, this is speculation because it does not say but all we have to do is put ourselves in their shoes and it won't take long to come up with some reasons that might sound good at first but are really sins of greed and pride. They may have thought they needed some of the money themselves or just wanted more money but because they lied about it, they were intentionally being deceptive and untrustworthy. Or, they may have wanted to bolster their reputation amongst the community and look like Barnabas who seemed to be well liked and received by the apostles and Christian community. To



be well-received and liked is not a bad thing. However, satisfying that desire through lying and deception certainly is! Furthermore, Luke makes it clear that Peter understood this as primarily an offence not against him or the Christian community but an offense against God the Holy Spirit (BTW – this is a proof text for the deity and personhood of the Holy Spirit). In other words, this goes against God’s design and desire for the way he wants his people to relate to one another. This seems obvious when pointed out but can easily be dismissed or minimized so as to not be dealt with. Lying and deception undermines Christians community and it is a sin against God himself. In other words, it is culpable shalom breaking and a God-damning waste of time (a Neil Plantinga phrase for sin and actually the right use of that word). It breaks the flourishing of community and it says to God that I don’t have to do it your way but I can and will do it my way.

When Ananias comes to Peter, he is confronted – “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man, but to God.” Ananias heard these words of puzzled condemnation and dropped dead. The same thing happens to his wife three hours later. They were in cahoots. This seems a little harsh. It is. That’s the point. It is making a statement to the new Christian community. Note the similarity of this story with the story of Achan in Joshua 7. In that story, the newly formed Israelites were entering the promised land for the first time and they were overthrowing the people living there. God had told them not to take any of the loot and spoil of the victories for themselves. But Achan did. In fact, the same word that described Achan “keeping back” some of the spoils for himself is the same word that Luke uses here for Ananias and Sapphira. It is used only one more time in the New Testament and it means to “steal.” If you remember, Achan was killed for his sin. Not only that, but his sons and daughters, oxen, donkeys and sheep were all killed too. Sin will be judged and God can judge it anytime he wants, whether in time or at the end of time. A statement was being made. Sin is serious. God is a holy God and a just God and God who judges and condemns it.

There is a double death over deceit and dishonesty. The brand-new Christian community has been shown to have the capacity to be unified and generous in the Spirit. And now, they are also shown to have the capacity to ruin that unity and tarnish that generosity with sin. Peter is crystal clear that what drove Ananias and Sapphira to lie and deceive was Satan. Were they possessed by Satan? I don’t know but doubt it. They were more likely “demonized” by him. That is, swayed by him and in cahoots with him. Regardless, sin’s motive is satanic. It is contra-Christ. It is anti-kingdom. It is counter-community. It is serious. And God knows. It is usually fairly easy to fool one another. In fact, if Peter wasn’t gifted insight into their true motives, he would have been duped too. Peter asks Ananias twice why he would do this. Indeed, why? Why not just be honest? Satan doesn’t care about honesty or about building and maintaining trust. He doesn’t care about community or its flourishing. He doesn’t care if the selfish act undermines relationships. He does not care if Ananias and Sapphira will die. He does care if it counters God. He does care if the act defies him. He loves that. And this is God’s point – he will not be mocked. Sin will be judged – all of it. Either we will be seen in Christ as holy and righteous (imputed righteousness) and therefore not guilty or we will be seen apart from Christ and all my sins will be exposed in all their heinous ugliness and I will be judged guilty and punished for it. Either Jesus Christ of Nazareth will have been punished for my sins or I will be punished for my sins. Either way, judgement and punishment for sin happens – either in Christ or in me.



Twice it says “mega” fear came upon the church. First when Ananias dies and the again when Sapphira dies three hours later. Can you imagine this scene at Community CRC. Lauren is talking about the offering when he calls two people out who have just put an envelope in the black boxes in the back. He exposes their hypocrisy and they drop dead in front of us all. I think great fear would be a good description of what we would be feeling at that moment. But I submit to you that this is not a scared and want to be far away fear (although I cannot imagine that they would not have a bit of this) but a holy awe in the presence of God who clearly made this happen. Peter does not curse them or command them to die. They simply do. This is God the Holy Spirit. I’m thinking a lot of repenting happened that day. I’m thinking a lot of people took a close look inside and asked themselves why am I a part of this community? Is it for me or for Jesus of Nazareth? Is it to satisfy my own selfish desires or to seek and strive for the obedience of faith? I’m thinking there was a lot of “Jesus Christ, Son of God. Have mercy on me, a sinner.” I’m thinking they were tracking with Tumnus who tells the Narnian visitors when asked if Aslan is safe. “Safe!” No, Aslan is not safe. But he is good.” And that is not a bad thing at all. Maybe each one of us needs to take a closer look inside at the motivations for my giving or serving or being a part of this community. Maybe each one of us needs to take a closer look at our sins and be more ready to humbly confess them and to repent and turn back to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Maybe each one of us needs to search for any trojan horses we might be using to hide sins of greed, gluttony, pride, sloth, envy, lust, anger. Maybe a little fear in our lives for the Living God who will judge the living and the dead is not a bad thing at all.

It is interesting that Luke chooses to first use the word for “church” in verse 11. Of all places! Before it was the fellowship or gathering but now it is the “ecclesia”, the called-out ones. The church is messy because it is filled with messy people. Maybe that is why he chose to present this word here, after the satanic sins of Ananias and Sapphira disrupt the Christian community. Striving for and maintaining Christian unity is hard and can only be done as we give ourselves in humble submission to the Holy Spirit and one another (Affirmation #5). May we all turn to Jesus Christ of Nazareth as the one who took our place, took our sin, took our deserved condemnation, took our punishment – for us. May we, in true humility and honesty live in relationship with one another, seeking not our own benefit but that of those around us. May we continue to foster, cultivate and nurture the body of Christ, the Church.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we are more like Ananias and Sapphira that we might care to admit. No one here is perfect. No one here is immune to selfish motives and decisions. No one here has consistently lived honest lives. I certainly have not. I am far worse than I know. Forgive me in Christ who has paid for all my sins. May we take sin seriously. Deadly serious! But may we also know how much we are loved by you. In Jesus name, Amen.

Communion Meditation

Professing: (Apostles Creed)

**We believe in God, the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.**

**We believe in Jesus Christ, God’s only Son, our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**

Born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,

Was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead.



**On the third day he rose and ascended to heaven
Where he is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,
The communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.**

Proclaiming: 1 Corinthians 11:23b-25 (Paraphrased)

On the night of his betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it saying, “this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” After the meal he took the cup of wine and pouring it out said, “this wine is my blood, a new covenant of grace poured out for the forgiveness of sins.”

Remember and believe that the body & blood of Jesus was given & shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Song – Be Thou My Vision -- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Opترم7IF16s>

*Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light
Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one
Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art
High King of Heaven, my victory won
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heav'n's Sun
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all*

Sending as Disciples of Jesus

May we live honestly and graciously and kindly with each other at Community CRC. May we seek not to cause division or be divisive. May we put our own agendas aside for the greater agenda of the church and the kingdom of God. May we act well as disciples of Jesus Christ and citizens of his kingdom and not primarily as Americans and citizens of the United States. May we be more concerned with the things that concern Jesus Christ of Nazareth than any other concerns that compete for his allegiance – family – sports – politics – money – possessions – status and much more.

We are sent out by God into the world as his witnesses. As we go, may we know with our minds and believe with our hearts and confess with our mouths the gospel of Jesus Christ and his kingdom. And may we live in a manner worthy of that Good News at work, at home, at school and in our neighborhood to the glory of God and through the person and power of the Holy Spirit.