

Sermon followed by Service - August 10, 2025 - Acts 5:1-11

How many ostriches do we have here today? How many of us like to think that if we stick our head in the sand, danger and trouble won't find us? I'm not being fair to ostriches, am I? The ostrich doesn't stick its head in the sand to hide from danger. We might, but ostriches don't. Now we don't really stick our heads in sand, do we? And most of us have probably grown out of that stage where we cover our ears - "Blah, blah, blah; I can't hear you; I don't have to listen to you." But we still have our ways, don't we? We hide behind or in front of a screen. We plug our ears, turn up our volume. We pull back (leave the room); we lash out.

What do you do when you're hearing something you don't want to hear? Or, more to the point today, what do you do when the Bible says something you don't want to hear? What do you do when God says something ... when God does something you don't want to hear?

Our lesson today is one of those lessons. Reading the Old Testament, we find more, a whole lot more. So ... what do we do when we come across lessons like today, when Ananias and Sapphira are struck down?

Lessons like this hurt. They scare. We don't want an angry God. We don't want to think God could be angry with us. We don't want to think that God judges and God damns and we deserve to have God judge and damn us. We don't want that Truth darkening our day. And what can be worse than hearing it

is having to explain it. We don't want to have to explain lessons like this. We don't want to be put in the position of having to defend God's bloody judgments ... not even to ourselves.

So what do we do? If we're reading the Bible, we might turn the page until we find something that feels better. If we're listening to a sermon, we might imagine the Bears winning the Super Bowl. We might bury our head in our smarts - "We know better than Moses, better than Paul; we know better now." Or we might bury our head in our feelings - "What the Bible says just doesn't feel right to me." We might tell our self: "That was then; this is now. God is different now. That's not our God; Jesus is our God. If Jesus were here, he wouldn't do that ... he wouldn't say that." In other words, we fashion Jesus to fit our thinking and our feeling ... and we judge the God of the Bible to be wrong.

It's easy to do that with our lesson, isn't it? We hear God strike down Ananias and Sapphira. What might we think? "Why didn't God give them another chance?" But how is it that we think we know Ananias' and Sapphira's hearts better than God did? Or we might think: "What Ananias and Sapphira did was such a small thing, God should have let it go" as if covering ourselves with self-serving lies is a small thing, and that lying to God to make ourselves look good is no big deal. Or we might just think: "I don't want to hear about God striking down Ananias and Sapphira; tell me something that will make me feel good." And as we cover our ears and stick our heads in the sand and turn the channel, we judge ourselves, not just to know better than God, but to be better than God.

Friends, the God of our lesson, the God of the Bible, is not some creation of our imagination ... small enough for us to 2nd guess, dense enough for us to trick and fool, weak and wimpy enough for us to push around ... so that we get to tell him what is right and what is wrong.

No. We don't get to create God to fit and reflect us. God created us to fit and reflect him. And if we don't want to fit and reflect him, what then? God will not be mocked. As we see in our lesson, those who reject him will be rejected.

So what do we do? Like David, we confess: "Have mercy on me, O LORD." Like Isaiah, we confess: "Woe to me! I am a man of unclean lips!" Like the hated tax-collector, we confess: "God, have mercy on me a sinner." Like Peter, we confess with tears.

And we thank God. We thank God that even though he knows how much in us is truth and how much is sham, he hasn't judged us done and struck us down. We thank God that he hasn't shut his ears to us or turned away from us. We thank God that instead of judging us in our weakness, instead of judging us in our sham, instead of lumping us with Ananias and Sapphira, God sees you connected with Jesus. So every day we wake up, we thank God for Jesus.

We thank God, that just as God gave Ananias and Sapphira the temple, God has given us a place to see the glory and goodness of God. We thank God, that through people such as Moses and Peter and John, God gave us his book, his Bible, where he shows us his heart. We don't have to figure God out

for ourselves ... we don't have to rely on our thinking or feeling to know the heart of God - he's told us in here. And he shows us his heart in Jesus. Thanks be to God, with Jesus, we don't have to come here afraid of God, hoping that our good outweighs our sham, or hoping we've hidden our sham well enough.

Here we see the cross. Here we are reminded of what Peter said: **“Jesus died, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.”** In Jesus, there was no, there is no sham, no hypocrisy, no self-serving lies, no fakery. Jesus was and Jesus is absolutely committed to God, 100% committed to working God's justice, 100% committed to showing God's love. So Jesus didn't pull back. When God charged Jesus as guilty of our sham and guilty of our self-serving lies ... when God judged Jesus guilty of our hypocrisy ... when God cursed Jesus for your sin and mine, Jesus didn't pull back to save himself. Jesus died, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. And today, he's not holding some grudge; he's not looking for some pay back. Today he promises: “Peace!”

In baptism, he promises peace as he, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, puts his name on you. In baptism, in place of our sham, God connects you and covers you with the life of Jesus. When we walk into church with Jesus, confessing “God, have mercy on me,” God doesn't see a hypocrite mocking him, daring him; but God sees you connected and covered with Jesus, right by Jesus. When we come to his Table, asking for forgiveness, even as we fight with ourselves to leave our sin behind, Jesus promises, “Peace. My body for you, my blood for you. My death for you. My life for you ... peace, forever!” ...

And when we come across lessons like today's lesson, instead of judging God wrong, instead of defending Ananias and Sapphira, instead of protecting the Ananias and Sapphira inside our own hearts, we confess, "God, forgive me." We pray, "God deliver me from my self-serving sham." And we thank God that when we come to church, we don't have to hide our heads in the sand. We thank God we don't have to shut our ears to God. But with Jesus, we get to walk and talk with God. We get to sing with the saints and angels. We get to hear God promise: "Peace and Blessing!" And we get to live and give with the heart of Jesus. Thank you, Lord! Amen.

August 9 & 10, 2025

CORPORATE CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... do you ever wonder: "How much is truth? How much is sham?" It's discouraging, isn't it? Do you ever wonder about in your own life, your own heart and mind: "How much is truth? How much is sham?" When we ask those questions of ourselves, it can be even more discouraging.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we are reminded that not only are those questions discouraging, but asking those questions of ourselves - "How much is truth? How much is sham?" - is essential to the repentance that is essential to redemption. Thank Jesus for a safe place to ask those questions ... and hear his answer!

OPENING HYMN

"Blessed Jesus, at Your Word"

Hymn 919

Blessèd Jesus, at your Word we are gathered all to hear you.
Let our hearts and souls be stirred now to seek and love and fear you,
by your teachings, sweet and holy, drawn from earth to love you solely.

All our knowledge, sense, and sight lie in deepest darkness shrouded
till your Spirit breaks our night with the beams of truth unclouded.
You alone to God can win us; you must work all good within us.

Gracious Savior, good and kind, Light from Light, from God proceeding,
open now our heart and mind; help us by your Spirit's pleading.
Hear the cry your Church now raises;
hear and bless our prayers and praises.

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, praise to you and adoration!
Grant that we your Word may trust, confident of our salvation,
while we here below must wander, till we sing your praises yonder.

INVOCATION

CW p. 278

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires are known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by your Holy Spirit, that we may love you and praise your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Acts 5:1–11

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With 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.

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? Didn'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."

When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

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

"Yes," she said, "that is the price."

Peter 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."

At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**



1 In hope - less - ness and near de - spair, I
 2 I see my heart's con - di - tion now, My
 3 I trem - ble as I feel your hand, Ex -
 4 For - giv - en, free of guilt and shame, Grant



cry to you, my Sav - ior! My guilt is more than
 heart's di - verse af - fec - tions. Why do I love the
 pec - ting re - tri - bu - tion, Yet hear no curse or
 me some time to ren - der A gift to glo - ri -



I can bear. I have not earned your fav - or. You
 things you loathe; I'm torn in two di - rec - tions: Now
 re - pri - mand, But grace and ab - so - lu - tion: With
 fy your name, Love to re - flect your splen - dor: This



know me as I real - ly am: How
 prod - i - gal, now Phar - i - see. O
 you there is for - give - ness, Lord, You
 world must know what I have learned, That



much is truth, how much is sham; Why
 God, be mer - ci - ful to me; Who
 speak the sweet, con - sol - ing Word, And
 you be - stow what none has earned: The



should you heed my plead - ing?
 else but you can help me?
 I am sure you love me!
 joy of full for - give - ness!

Our help is in the name of the Lord,
the maker of heaven and earth.

Let us confess our sins to God and ask for his forgiveness.

Almighty God, merciful Father,

I confess to you that I have not loved you with all my heart.

In what I have done and left undone,

I have pursued my ways instead of your ways.

I have not loved others as you command.

For this I deserve your punishment now and forever.

I am sorry for my sins. I repent of them. I beg for your mercy.

Forgive us for the sake of Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for us.

Cleanse me from my sins.

Release me from my guilt.

Grant me your Holy Spirit to amend my sinful life.

Jesus says to his people, "If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven." Do you believe this?

Yes, I believe.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved.

In the name of T Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins.

Amen.

EXHORTATION

Our Lord Jesus Christ has forgiven us, has reconciled us to God, and has promised us the power to forgive and love one another. Relying on his promise, therefore, be reconciled with one another.

Brothers and sisters, may the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, in our words, and in our actions.

PRAYER

God, our Father, by the sacrifice of your Son you reconciled the world to yourself. We thank you for the precious gift of forgiveness. Refresh us with the joy of our salvation, that we may walk in the way of peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Renew our minds and wills, that daily we may speak your word of peace; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

SECOND READING

Acts 5:12–16

The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Hebrews 4:12

Alleluia. For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Luke 12:22–34

Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"

“Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

HYMN

“Where Your Treasure Is”

Hymn 828

Refrain

Where your treasure is, there your heart shall be.

All that you possess will never set you free.

Seek the things that last; come and learn from me.

Where your treasure is, your heart shall be.

What do you gain from all your worry,

what you should eat or what to wear?

There is no peace in stress or hurry.

Do you not know that you are held within God’s care? *Refrain*

Look at the ravens high above you.

They do not work their whole life through,

and yet God feeds them and protects them.

So how much more will God protect and care for you? *Refrain*

Behold the lilies in their splendor. In grace and beauty are they dressed,
and yet so soon their bloom is faded.

So how much more will those who look to God be blessed? *Refrain*

O little flock, do not be frightened; yours is the kingdom of the Lord.

Give your possessions to the needy;

obtain a treasure in God's heaven safely stored. *Refrain*

SERMON

Acts 5:1-16

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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 into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN

"We Give Thee but Thine Own"

Hymn 750

We give thee but thine own, whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

May we thy bounties thus as stewards true receive
and gladly, as thou blessest us, to thee our firstfruits give.

OFFERING

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PRAYER (A SAMPLING FROM OUR NEW HYMNAL)

When Tempted to Sin – page 256

Lord Jesus, you experienced the temptations of Satan and you know his power. You defeated him with your Word, but now he is after me with his lies and empty promises. Be with me and guard me day and night so that I may resist his evil and overcome his treachery. When I fall, lift me up with your forgiving love. When I triumph, keep me humble and watchful, for Satan will come again. In you, Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame.

For Peace and Patience in the Family – page 255

Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love never fails. Lord Jesus, you did not give up on us or abandon a world of sinners; instead, you made your dwelling among us. Give us patient and selfless love that reflects your love for us. Move us to put aside the pain of the past, to forgive those who have sinned against us, and to enjoy together the peace of being forgiven by you and by one another.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER FOR PEACE

Lord God, all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works come from you. Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey your commandments. Defend us also from the fear of our enemies, that we may live in peace and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

Go in peace. Christ Jesus has set you free.

Thanks be to God.

CLOSING HYMN

“Jesus Sinners Does Receive”

Hymn 654 vs. 1, 6-7

Jesus sinners does receive; oh, may all this saying ponder
who in sin’s delusions live and from God and heaven wander.
Here is hope for all who grieve: Jesus sinners does receive.

Now my conscience is at peace, from the law I stand acquitted.
Christ has purchased my release and my ev’ry sin remitted.
Naught remains my soul to grieve: Jesus sinners does receive.

Jesus sinners does receive, even I have been forgiven.
And when I this earth must leave, I shall find an open heaven.
Dying, still to him I cleave: Jesus sinners does receive.

*Special thanks to Meredith Fein for beautifying our Saturday worship
with violin.*

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