

Acts 5:12–42

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[0 : 0 0] That's Acts 5, 12 to 42. Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles, and they were all together in Solomon's portico.

None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And more than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats that as Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on some of them.

The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him, that is, the party of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy, they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.

But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said, Go and stand in the temple, and speak to the people all the words of this life.

And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest came and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

[1 : 1 9] But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison. So they returned and reported, We found the prison securely locked, and the guards standing at the doors.

But when we opened them, we found no one inside. Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to.

And someone came and told them, Look, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people. Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

But Peter and the apostles answered, We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree.

[2 : 2 5] God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.

When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while.

And he said to them, Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. For before these days, Theodos rose up claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about 400, joined him.

He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. And after him, Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him.

He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. So in the present case, I tell you, Keep away from these men, and let them alone. For if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail.

[3 : 33] But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God. So they took his advice, and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus and let them go.

Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Well, good morning. This morning, I do want to acknowledge that there are two newborns that will hear their first sermon this morning.

And so Blake and Liesel welcomed little Lincoln just a little over a week ago. And Chet and Hannah welcomed little Teddy just about a week ago.

And for them, those little boys, may this sermon be one of many, not necessarily from me, but many opportunities to sit under the word of the Lord.

[4 : 58] And let me just pray for us. Father, we come to the word of the Lord. And before we go to the word, we come to the Lord of the word.

And we ask that you would illumine it for us. And that even as we sit, that you would soften our rugged hearts, that you would loosen our plugged ears, that we may hear the voice of God through the scriptures.

Help us to that end, we pray. We ask these things for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. I don't remember her name. I can envision her silhouette, peppered hair, older and frail.

And we were at, I was at a summer camp of sorts. And during activity time, this lady, who I don't know a name, I can barely remember a face, she was leading the craft of the day.

We were all handed a leather string. And we were to craft a leather bracelet with colored beads.

[6 : 25] And she proceeded to hand out these beads. And every child received five. There was a gold one, a black one, a red one, a white one.

And a green one. And she said, well, we're going to first put the green one, or the gold one on. And it represents God in heaven, who made you and wants to be with you.

And then we're going to put on the black one. And though God wants to be with us, our hearts are stained. We were disobedient, and our sins separated us.

And then slide on the red one. which is representative of the fact that God sent his son to shed his own blood for you, for the forgiveness of your sins.

And then slip on the white one, that if you believe and trust in him, though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow. And then you slip on the green one, which didn't make sense to me.

[7 : 36] I'm like, green? What is green? Green, you're supposed to continue to grow and follow Jesus all the days of your life. This is one of the many countless faces that spoke the gospel to me.

I don't remember her. I trust she's present with the Lord. But this morning, our vision at Christ Church Chicago is to be not only a multi-ethnic and cross-cultural church, but we desire to be a church that proclaims Jesus Christ to everyone.

We are in the second week of a three-part series highlighting the three facets of our vision statement. And I've been tasked with the center of this statement. We are a church that proclaims Jesus Christ to everyone.

To everyone. Now, proclamation carries this notion of formality. You think of maybe it's only here on the platform or behind some other lectern or over an intercom or a speaker system.

But I want to argue that it's far more than that when we think about proclamation. It certainly carries or conveys a sense of announcement, of making something known.

[9 : 04] It's declarative. But for our intentions, for our purposes this morning, I want us to simply think of proclamation as an interpersonal verbal exchange.

An interpersonal verbal exchange. It can be simple speech or some sophisticated audible transmission.

It may come through a loudspeaker or an intercom, or it can come through the medium of a quiet conversation around a dining table or even a whisper in one's ear.

The Christian, we, are those who tell everybody about Jesus. It is the heart of the Christian faith. If you count yourself to be a Christian, if you count yourself to be a Christian, what it required was someone telling you about Jesus.

Do you recall who the person was? Maybe for Timothy, a grandmother and a mother. Maybe for you, a colleague, a classmate, a friend, a podcast, a pastor, a teacher, or even a complete stranger.

[10 : 22] Regardless of who the messenger was, it required the transmission of the message. See, we are under the conviction that whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And how do we call upon the name of the Lord? How do we come to believe? Well, belief comes by hearing. And hearing comes through a proclaimer or a preacher.

Therefore, how beautiful are those feet who preach and bring good news. Faith comes by hearing. And since it comes by hearing, it necessitates and presumes that someone is doing the speaking.

Certainly God speaks. But he has chosen the medium of frail and fragile humans to transmit the most glorious message of heaven's son.

We are, the apostle writes, weak jars of clay, carrying about in our bodies the treasure of Jesus to the world.

[11 : 36] See, this underpins our conviction to be a congregation that proclaims Jesus Christ to everyone. So the question you're probably asking, and I've asked, and I am asking, well, there's so many texts you could have picked, Bing.

Why Acts chapter 5, 12 through 42? There's so many. Why this particular one?

Well, let me tell you why. It gives us a picture of proclaiming Jesus to everyone when it is hard, when it is difficult, when it is challenging, when proclaiming Christ is unwelcome and unwanted, in a day when sharing Jesus is off-putting and no one wants to hear it, what are we to do?

Well, that's why we situated ourselves in Acts chapter 5. It was familiar for the early church. Following the resurrection, there was a radical expansion of the church, you can imagine.

Everyone was talking about Jesus. So much so, the religious authorities were getting annoyed. The gospel was spreading rapidly, and the religious authorities wanted to quench the fire.

[13 : 01] If your Bibles are open, in chapter 4, they've already been instructed, in chapter 4, verse 17, that in order that it may spread, or the gospel, or the word of Jesus was spread no further among the people, they warned the disciples to speak no more to anyone in his name.

So they called them in and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. After further threats, in chapter 4, they're let go. And they immediately go into a prayer meeting.

And what's shocking about the prayer meeting is they're not asking for safety or security or that God would harbor them or protect them.

Or they're not saying, God, the gospel is in us. You have to protect us. You have to guard us. If all of our lives are lost, the word is gone. No.

They go into that prayer meeting and they ask for more courage and more boldness. It's astounding. They go into the prayer meeting and their sole request is that was for further boldness in defiance of the religious leaders.

[14 : 16] Opposition would not quiet these disciples. Difficulty would not silence their tongues. Here in chapter 5, their continued proclamation gets them in further trouble.

The stage is clear and the tensions are really high. The religious leaders, according to verse 17, are filled with jealousy and have the apostles arrested and put in public prison.

In the middle of the night, there's a jailbreak that comes not at the initiative of the disciples, but shockingly at the initiative of God himself.

The entire scene is quite humorous. The apostles are set free unbeknownst to the guards and the officers. They're broken out of jail and they're immediately instructed to go back and to continue proclamation.

They're instructed to return to the very tasks that had got them put into prison. Well, this morning, I want to make, I don't know, three charges, three observations that really bolster this conviction that we have to proclaim Jesus Christ to everyone.

[15 : 34] And the first is this. Proclamation is a priority. It's a priority. The apostles were told to stop and yet they continued.

The answer is a bold response to the command from the religious authorities. They are told to be silent, yet they continue to speak and proclaim. And their reasoning is very simple according to verse 29.

We must obey God rather than men. It's not just some divine compulsion they're following. No, it is a divine obligation.

We must. It's not we feel. It's not we sense. It's not we think. It's we must.

Proclamation is a matter of divine obedience. It is a matter of divine obedience. The disciples were under a mandate to proclaim, to speak, to share, to teach, to tell.

[16 : 43] It was their duty and difficulty would not relieve them of that duty. When things get hard, it doesn't provide an excuse to abandon our obligations.

A student is not relieved from their academic responsibilities because it got hard. A parent is not exempt from their parental responsibilities because they have difficult children.

A soldier cannot choose to abandon a mission because the task is difficult. In the same way, the disciples, including you and I, the disciple of Jesus, we must speak.

We cannot stay silent simply because it's uncomfortable or difficult. Now, don't misunderstand me. This does not mean we don't exercise wisdom or tact, sensitivities, or speak in a winsome manner.

But it does mean is that there is no circumstance or situation where proclamation is unacceptable.

[18 : 00] unacceptable. There is never a situation, never a time or place where proclamation is unacceptable. And what I mean by that is whether the disciples stood before councils or synagogues, governors, or kings, the promise was that God would be with them and God would endow them with His Spirit and that He would give them the words to declare and proclaim Christ.

In other words, whenever you and I, the Christian, are put on trial before others, we are to be faithful in witness.

We are to be faithful in witness. It should not be lost on us that the only named disciple in this section is Peter. He's largely, granted, he's largely the leader and the representative of the apostolic band.

But it is the same Peter who failed to be a faithful witness when Jesus stood trial. It's the same Peter that cowered in fear when confronted three times.

Now is the very same Peter that stands like a sentinel before the Sanhedrin. He once buckled in fear and now is bold in faith.

[19 : 20] And it would be the same for every subsequent Christian generation. When you're called to testify, when you're called out, are you a Christian?

Where are you going this early on a Sunday morning? Why are you abandoning your studies on this Wednesday or Thursday night to meet with some Bible reading group?

when you're mocked in family gatherings? So-and-so has given their life to Jesus.

For every generation, whether you stand before advisors, professors, family, friends, colleagues, and given the opportunity to bear witness or undergo trial for your faith, you are to give yourself to the priority of proclamation.

Priority of proclamation. We are, as in the language of Peter himself, always to be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.

[20 : 42] always be ready. They were bold and witness because they made proclamation a priority.

Second, our proclamation is not about nothing. It's about Jesus Christ. Christ. The subject line of the email is clear.

Jesus Christ. He is the content of our very message. We proclaim a person. Paul would write, Him we proclaim.

We don't promote an ideology. We don't proclaim a philosophy. We don't announce a system, but we proclaim Christ. Christ. And Peter, who is being tried along with the disciples, is making this very clear who it is all about.

Verse 30. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins.

[21 : 57] And we are witnesses to these things. Verse 42. Oh, marvelous verse. And every day in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

It's about Jesus. Not Jesus, a moral teacher. Not Jesus, the miracle worker or social worker, but Jesus as leader and savior.

The Messiah, the anointed king is Jesus. We announce what God did in Christ. He is the captain of our salvation. He is the author and the perfecter of our faith.

He is the alpha and the omega. He is the sin bearer. He is the judge. He is the resurrection and the life, the light of the world, the good shepherd. He is the king of kings and the lord of lords.

He is the wonderful counselor, the mighty God, prince of peace everlasting. He is Emmanuel, God with us. He is certainly the very way, truth, and life.

[23 : 10] And this is the content of our message, a man, Christ Jesus. See, it's telling when you and I share our faith or have an opportunity to share our faith.

how did you become Christian? What did you do to become Christian? Well, if I'm honest, I did nothing.

I did very little. He did everything. It started with his initiative that his heart was so moved to love me.

It was his love that compelled me or faith in me. It was his beauty that drew my affection.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son. He sent his only son. And I wonder what difference it would make when you and I begin to share our faith in that way.

[24 : 22] because oftentimes it's like, you know what? I believed. I was hurting. And I did this. I did this. And I did this.

And I'm not saying those things are not true. But I wonder if we started with God did this. God reached down. God took hold.

God is speaking. God is saving. God is saving. Because it's far less about me. It's ultimately all about him.

The proclamation is about God in Christ. And since Christ is the subject of our proclamation, it should be noted. Well, I'll note this.

Since Christ is the subject of our proclamation, it invites and leaves us susceptible to suffer personal dishonor.

[25 : 24] It's interesting what this passage notes in verse 41. The disciples are beaten in verse 40, charged to stay silent, and then they let go.

And then in verse 41, they leave the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. When you and I proclaim Christ, dishonor may ensue.

Personal dishonor. For the disciples, it came in the form of beating or violence for the name of Christ. He's the subject of our proclamation.

It came at the cost of personal dishonor, reputation, status, and standing. Yet, I don't want us to overlook this because I think there's something here, and I haven't worked it out entirely, but I think it's this.

What ensued from suffering dishonor was not actually shame. Like, when I'm dishonored, I feel shame or guilt.

[26 : 36] But in this case, it's actually joy. And as you, and I think there's something at work here, that as you and I share Christ with others, joy ensues.

Now, your heart may be downcast. you may be overwhelmed with shame or guilt or inadequacy, anxiety. And I wonder, I can't help but deduce from this passage that in the early church, or perhaps for many of us, lack of joy comes because of lack of proclamation.

salvation. And I'm not a great evangelist. And when I have muster enough the courage to say something about Jesus and get over the what are they going to think of me or how is this going to dishonor me or how am I going to embarrass myself, and if I get over all that and I say something about Jesus, at the end of the day, my reputation may have gotten a little bit lower.

I may have been laughed out a little bit louder. I may have been mocked a little bit more publicly. But at the end of the day, I go to bed more joy filled.

And so I can't help but think that when I lack joy, when we lack joy, is it because we lack proclamation. Well, he is the subject of our proclamation.

[28 : 31] Him we proclaim. The priority of proclamation, the person of proclamation, and lastly, we are to persist in proclamation.

The disciples are to persist in proclamation. They are instructed to quit it. to hush, to quiet down, stop teaching in the public square.

But opposition is not an excuse for silence. Though it is challenged, though you and I may be challenged, undermined the gospel, opposed and unwelcomed, it is to continue.

shockingly, even at the cost of their very own physical well-being, they are to continue. They are beaten for their ongoing teaching in defiance of the religious authorities, but they persist.

The summarizing statement in verse 42 is astounding. And every day, every day, in the temple, and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

[29 : 45] And in the same way that the early church pressed on to proclaim in her infancy, we are to do the same. Proclamation continues despite persecution. We are to give ourselves a proclamation continually and regularly.

There is no quota. I spoke to my person this week. There is no timetable. We are to always be about proclamation.

They did not cease teaching and preaching. There is this continual nature, this ongoing nature, this never stopping, never giving up in season and out of season when I feel like it or when I don't.

When it's convenient or inconvenient, it doesn't matter. That is every day all the time. And what's shocking is even when the church is flourishing and they're distracted by good things, which you'll find in the next chapter, that they have to now extend themselves to helping widows, those in need.

Acts tells us, Luke the writer tells us, that even when the social needs of the community arise, we cannot deter from it. It must continue.

[30 : 59] We are to endure hardship and suffering to do the work of evangelists. Do not stop speaking. And where does it proclamation occur? in our passages, largely happens in the public square.

Solomon's portico is named, particularly here in the temple grounds where education and instruction occurred. But Luke the writer wants us to know that proclamation persisted not only in the public sphere, but interestingly in the private sphere as well.

From house to house. Now, I'm not ready to say that we are to go door to door. Though some do and some should in sharing the faith.

And it doesn't discredit that method. Rather, whether in the open air of the temple grounds or under the closed roof of a home, in public or in private, proclamation persisted.

We are to be speakers and sharers of a message that doesn't have any spatial constraints. That's why we take it to the ends of the world.

[32 : 14] That's why we make it our aim to speak to all types of people. See, you would be mistaken to think that only proclamation happens here in this building.

That's not true. It's not limited or confined to churches or religious establishments or spiritual spaces. No, proclamation happens on car rides, in airplane cabins, bus journeys, dinner tables, coffee, houses.

Proclamation cannot be confined. There is no place that is out of bounds for speaking the gospel. It happens anywhere and everywhere.

And the text acknowledges that even though it happens anywhere and everywhere, it won't be universally accepted. It both simultaneously attracts and repels.

Verse 13, I was wrestling over it. It's a really interesting verse. The disciples are doing signs and wonders through the power of Christ.

[33 : 35] And nobody, verse 13, none of the rest dared to join them, but the people held them in high esteem. And then verse 14, and more than ever, believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.

And Luke is telling us that some people don't want it, and others will take hold of it. And as we close, I just want to note Gamaliel's comment.

What he says appeases the council. And ironically, he affirmed more than he knew, because he grabs the social historical context that he lived in, and he makes this assumption.

He says, we've seen this before. We've seen past movements, human endeavors fizzle because of the death of a leader. So you have Thutis who rises up in verse 36.

He claims to be somebody. About 400 people join him. He dies, and all his followers are dispersed and came to nothing.

[34 : 43] And in verse 37, Judas the Galilean does the same. He rises up. He draws away people after him. He dies, he perishes, and all who follow him are the same.

And so Gamaliel makes this comment, oh, we've seen this. When the leader dies, the movement ends.

But Gamaliel didn't know. You know where I'm going. He thought Jesus died, and rose again.

And so what you have in Gamaliel's statement is this bizarre, oh, I think it's going to end. And if it doesn't, then it's a God thing.

Well, he found out it was a God thing. God because here in whatever year this was, it launched. And we are beneficiaries.

[35 : 51] We are recipients of the proclamation of the apostles. We walk into this rich lineage, the proclamation, and the human enterprise wants to squelch the movement.

And they've been trying to do so from the beginning. But Christianity continues to triumph. And it's certainly not because of competent human leadership, the amassing of resources, or power it may yield politically.

No, it continues because what Gamaliel said is true. If it is God, then you will never be able to overthrow them. And it continues not only because of Gamaliel's words, but because of Jesus' words.

I will build my church, and the gates of hell will never prevail against her. And still, this is what we find operative in our world today, in the midst of difficulty, persecution, opposition, and conflict.

Maybe for us in these quarters, social ostracism, or maybe these strange pronouncements of people on Christians. But regardless, the church grows.

[37 : 12] And the church will grow, and continue to grow, as it prioritizes and persists in the proclamation of Jesus Christ.

Christ, my hope is that our reputation in the neighborhood becomes just that.

It's a bunch of people that just talk about Jesus all the time. And whether it be from this platform, or the privacy of your home, whether it be invisibility, or anonymity, whether it be in a hospitable setting, or a hostile setting, may we be all about the priority of the persistent proclamation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ. Let me pray for us. Father, we desire to give ourselves to this task.

And I think it was Whitfield who prayed, loosen my stammering tongue to tell of thy riches immense, immeasurable.

[38 : 43] and so for all of our tongues, may you loosen them to speak of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, a king who's come to save.

Help us to that end, we pray. We ask these things in his name. Amen. Well, I invite you to stand.