**Lesson 6**

**Acts 4:32-5:42 Insincere gifts, miracles and trial**

*In last week’s lesson Peter and John face the Sanhedrin. They were ultimately released from prison with a command to discontinue preaching in the name of Jesus Christ. With great courage they defended the healing power and salvation that comes through Jesus Christ alone. The community responded with prayer of gratitude and a request for “boldness” as they continue to spread the Word of Jesus Christ.*

1. **When this week did you feel closest to God. Was there a particular passage or lesson in Acts this week that you found particularly inspiring?**
2. **How did being filled with the Holy Spirit affect the actions of this community?**

**In the 21st century, how does the Holy Spirit inspire the parish community *or you* personally? Reflection on Acts 4:32-36, Acts 2:42-47, John 13:34-35 and 1 John 4:8.**

**Acts 4:32-3632**The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. **33**With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all. **34**There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, **35**and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.

**36**Thus Joseph, also named by the apostles Barnabas (which is translated “son of encouragement”), a Levite, a Cypriot by birth, **37**sold a piece of property that he owned, then brought the money and put it at the feet of the apostles.

**Acts 2:42-4742**They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. **43**Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. **44**All who believed were together and had all things in common; **45**they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need. **46**Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, **47**praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

**John 13:34-35 34**I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another. **35**This is how all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

**1 John 4:8** **8**Whoever is without love does not know God, for *God is love*.

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1. **What was the sin that Ananias and Sapphira are guilty of? See Acts 5:1-11.**

**Acts 5:1-11** **1**A man named Ananias, however, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property. **2**He retained for himself, with his wife’s knowledge, some of the purchase price, took the remainder, and put it at the feet of the apostles. **3**But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart so that you lied to the holy Spirit and retained part of the price of the land? **4**While it remained unsold, did it not remain yours? And when it was sold, was it not still under your control? Why did you contrive this deed? You have lied not to human beings, but to God.” **5**When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last, and great fear came upon all who heard of it. **6**The young men came and wrapped him up, then carried him out and buried him.

**7**After an interval of about three hours, his wife came in, unaware of what had happened. **8**Peter said to her, “Tell me, did you sell the land for this amount?” She answered, “Yes, for that amount.” **9**Then Peter said to her, “Why did you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen, the footsteps of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.” **10**At once, she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. When the young men entered, they found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. **11**And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things.

1. **Why was the punishment so severe? What lesson are we to learn from this story?**
2. **Was it necessary to donate *all* of your property to the community? How do Peter’s comments explain this?**
3. **How did the people of Jerusalem and surrounding communities respond to the Apostles after healing of the lame man in chapter 4? See Acts 5:12-16. (Look for at least 3 answers here.)**

**Acts 5:12-1612**Many signs and wonders were done among the people at the hands of the apostles. They were all together in Solomon’s portico. **13**None of the others dared to join them, but the people esteemed them. **14**Yet more than ever, believers in the Lord, great numbers of men and women, were added to them. **15**Thus they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and mats so that when Peter came by, at least his shadow might fall on one or another of them. **16**A large number of people from the towns in the vicinity of Jerusalem also gathered, bringing the sick and those disturbed by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.

1. **St. Augustine tells us that an unjust law is no law at all. The Apostles have defied the Sanhedrin when they continued to teach about Jesus, and when they continued to heal in His name.**

 **How did the authorities respond this time? See Acts 5:17-18 and Acts 5:27-33.**

**Acts 5:17-18 17**Then the high priest rose up and all his companions, that is, the party of the Sadducees, and, filled with jealousy, **18**laid hands upon the apostles and put them in the public jail.

**Acts 5:27-3327**When they had brought them in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest questioned them, **28**“We gave you strict orders [did we not?] to stop teaching in that name. Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man’s blood upon us.” **29**But Peter and the apostles said in reply, “We must obey God rather than men. **30**[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+5&version=NABRE#fen-NABRE-31409d)]The God of our ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree. **31**God exalted him at his right hand[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+5&version=NABRE#fen-NABRE-31410e)] as leader and savior to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. **32**We are witnesses of these things, as is the holy Spirit that God has given to those who obey him.”

**33**When they heard this, they became infuriated and wanted to put them to death.

1. **How do we know that God was on the side of the Apostles and their teachings?**

**See Acts 5:19-20.**

**Acts 5:19-2019**But during the night, the angel of the Lord opened the doors of the prison, led them out, and said,**20**“Go and take your place in the temple area, and tell the people everything about this life.”

1. **Check your Bible for footnotes about Gamaliel. Who was this man?**
2. **What were Gamaliel’s thoughts and suggestions on how to handle the Apostles and their teachings about Jesus? See Acts 5:38-39.**

**Acts 5:38-3938**So now I tell you, have nothing to do with these men, and let them go. For if this endeavor or this activity is of human origin, it will destroy itself. **39**But if it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them; you may even find yourselves fighting against God.” They were persuaded by him.

1. **Why were the Apostles happy about being flogged and released? See Acts 5:40-42 and Matthew 5:10-11.**

**Acts 5:40-42 40**After recalling the apostles, they had them flogged, ordered them to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and dismissed them. **41**So they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. **42**And all day long, both at the temple and in their homes, they did not stop teaching and proclaiming the Messiah, Jesus.

**Matthew 5:10-11** Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
    for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**11**“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. **12**Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.