

## I. Introduction

Good morning! In our previous message in Acts, we talked about how amazing miracles were a daily occurrence in the first days of the church. In that time, the Lord was moving in the ministry of the apostles in a very powerful way and many great miracles were happening. You may remember that we read in **Acts 5:16, "Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed."** When we see this verse, we realize that the people of Jerusalem and beyond must have been filled with joy at the miracles being done by the apostles. But in today's passage, we will see that the religious leaders had a very different reaction. Let's read Acts 5:17-26.

## II. Scripture Acts 5:17-26 (NIV 1984)

17 Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. 18 They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. 19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 20 "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life." 21 At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin--the full assembly of the elders of Israel--and sent to the jail for the apostles. 22 But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, 23 "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside." 24 On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were puzzled, wondering what would come of this. 25 Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." 26 At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

## III. Teaching

The religious leaders could have praised God for the miraculous healings, but they chose a darker path. (**Acts 5:17**) **"Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy."** They were filled with jealousy and they tried again to stop the apostles by arresting them and having them thrown in jail. From their actions, we realize that these religious leaders did not fear God. These men had knowledge of the Scriptures and high rank in the religious system, but they did not fear God.



These leaders were trained in the Scriptures and they would certainly have been familiar with the words of **Psalms 111:10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."** But, somehow, they had come to disregard the warnings of Scripture and they had become arrogant and overconfident in their power and authority. They refused to recognize Jesus despite the many proofs that showed that He was the Messiah, and now they are plotting against Jesus' disciples as well. It is easy to criticize their attitude. But it is more profitable for us to take their mistakes as a warning to us.

We need to guard our hearts against wrong attitudes like arrogance and jealousy. We need to walk in humility and obedience, following the example of our Lord Jesus. We would do well to remember the attitude Jesus taught the disciples in **Matthew 20:26b-28, "...whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave -- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** (Art: Christ Washing Peter's Feet by Ford



Madox Brown)

The Lord is patient and He gives grace and time for repentance, but His patience is not without limit. In the case of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem, from the time Jesus warned them to change their ways in John 2 when He drove the moneychangers out of the temple courtyards, the Lord gave them about 40 years to repent. But they did not repent, and in the end the Lord brought judgment on them when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Roman legions in 70 AD.



David Roberts painted the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans like this. In the painting, the temple has not yet been burned, but before the attack was over, the city was destroyed and the temple burned. I think God allowed His temple to be destroyed for two reasons. The first is that it was a judgment against the high priests and Jewish leaders who continued to persecute the followers of Jesus out of anger and jealousy. The second is that the purpose of the temple as a place of worship had been fulfilled with the coming of Jesus and it was time for the worship of God to be centered in the church, and therefore the temple was no longer needed in God's plan.



Let's get back to today's passage. The Jewish leaders had the apostles arrested and thrown in jail. However, when people oppose the work of God, their plans do not succeed. So, in **Acts 5:19** the Scripture tells us, **"But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out."** In the Bible, angels perform many tasks. Angels rescue believers. Angels deliver messages from God. And sometimes angels carry out God's judgments.



This might make us wonder why God doesn't have the angels preach the Good News of Jesus to the world. I am sure the angels could do it faster and more efficiently than we can. But in God's wisdom and in His sovereign plan, He has given the task of preaching the gospel in this age to the church. In the church age, the task of reaching out to the men and women of this fallen world and sharing the love of Jesus and the Good News of salvation through faith in Jesus is given to the church, to all of us who believe in Jesus.

So, the angel directs the apostles back to the task of preaching the Good News. (**Acts 5:20**), **"Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life."** The apostles obeyed the word brought by the angel and returned to preaching in the temple courts as soon as morning came. The Jewish leaders and the guards were very puzzled as to how the apostles got out of jail. Even so, as soon as they heard that the apostles were preaching in the temple courts, they once again sent the temple guard to arrest them, but we will talk about that part next week.

For today, let's focus on the command the angel gave the apostles. Notice that there are three parts to the command. Go. Stand. Tell. These three words teach us a lot about the gospel mission. The first word is, "Go." In sharing our faith, we should be active, not passive. We cannot just stay at home or at the church and wait for someone to come and ask us about Jesus. Instead, we need to take the initiative and go. Go to the people; go to everyone who hasn't heard about Jesus. When we get there, we need to, "Stand." This word speaks of perseverance. We do not just go once, give the message and then go home. Instead, we take a stand, we persevere, we continue in our efforts to share the gospel even when there is opposition or no response. The third word is, "Tell." We need to tell the people about Jesus. We need to tell the people about God's love. We need to tell the people about sin, repentance, and forgiveness. We need to tell the people the full message of this new life.

**Romans 10:13** tells us, **"Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."** This is a wonderful promise, but Paul immediately continues saying in **Romans 10:14-15**, **"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is**



written, **‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’**”

The Lord freely offers salvation to all who call on His name. But the message of the Good News must be proclaimed, and the Lord has given that mission to us, to the church. In **Mark 16:15**, the command is given in these words. **“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”** This is the command to the church as a whole. In every generation the church is responsible to proclaim the gospel to the ends of the earth.

But what about the individual Christian in a particular time and place? We cannot all go to every nation in the world and preach the Good News; that would be impossible. But we all have a role in this great mission and there is a place for each of us to go, stand, and tell the Good News. After the angel led the apostles out of jail in **Acts 5:20**, he told them, **“Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.”** On that day, their place of mission was the temple courts. but each of us should ask ourselves, where is my place to speak the Good News? Where are my temple courts?

In **Mark 5:19**, after Jesus had cast a demon out of a man, the man begged to go with Jesus. But look at how Jesus responded, **“Jesus did not let him, but said, ‘Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.’”** On that day, that man’s, “temple courts,” was his own home and his own family and friends.

In **Luke 10:1**, we read, **“After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.”** With these words, the disciples were sent to all of the little towns and villages throughout the land.

In **Acts 16:9-10**, Paul received a call in a vision. **“During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”** Paul had just been given a new place of mission, new, “temple courts,” where he was commanded to, “Go, Stand, and Tell,” the Good News of Jesus.

One Christian may be sent to share the Good News with their family. Another may be sent to their coworkers at their company. A third may be sent to stand to preach in the streets of Osaka. A fourth may be sent to the disaster area in Tohoku. Yet another may be sent to foreign lands. Or the same brother or sister might even be sent to do all of these things over the course of months or years. Year by year and day by day, we are each given our own, “temple courts,” where we are sent to share the love of Jesus.

The command to share the Good News of Jesus with the whole world is given to the church as a whole, but we all have our role and our place of ministry. We have different gifts and abilities, so we won’t all preach the Good News in the same way. But we all commanded to share the Good News of Jesus.

#### IV. Conclusion

Today, I want to challenge you to ask the Lord in prayer, “Where are my temple courts?” The Lord may send one person home to minister to their family. Another may be led to contact an old friend and invite them to lunch. Yet another may find that the Lord gives them a burden to reach out to people they work with or go to school with. Some may be sent to the streets and parks of Osaka. Perhaps the Lord will even call someone to move to another place just to start a new ministry there. But we know, that however and wherever the Lord may lead us, we are not alone, because He has promised us that He will always be with us.



We have the command and we have the promise. Will we obey? It is my prayer that each and every one of us will say, “yes,” to Jesus and, “yes,” to His command to share His love with all people. Let’s close with **Matthew 28:18-20**, **“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded**

**you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”**

Let's pray.

V. Prayer

Dear heavenly Father,

We praise Your Holy Name and give thanks for the wonders of Your grace and mercy. You have shown Your great love for us by sending Your Son, Jesus, to die on the cross for us. And You have provided proof of Your wonderful promises of forgiveness of sins and eternal life through raising Jesus from the dead. Through Jesus, You have also given us the command to take the Good News to all of world. Lord, come now and minister to us by Your Holy Spirit. Touch our hearts and minds and open them so that we might hear Your voice. Where are You sending us, Lord? To whom shall we go and what is our place to stand and tell the people the Good News of grace and mercy. Lord, we have the command and the promises. Help us to understand clearly the role each of us has been assigned for the work of Your Kingdom. Speak to Your people, Lord. And give us the courage to speak to others about Your amazing grace. Lord, we know that You care about each and every challenge we face in our lives. So, please come and minister to us. Bring healing for the sick, new strength for the weak and tired, new hope for those who are discouraged, new joy to those who are feeling down, and the blessing of Your powerful presence. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit and renew in us the joy of salvation. In Jesus' precious Name I pray, amen.