

### When God's At Work – Acts 4:32-35

Act 4; While you're turning there, and before we get going, I want to mention 2 things

The first, is that **Nate Kittelson**, the young man on our staff who found out he had a rare form of leukemia back in June – died on Wednesday

And while we mourn his loss, and the impact he had on our lives; And grieve with his sister and brother-in-law in our church . . .

We rejoice that he's finally home – no more suffering, no more pain, no more tears . . .

Just near to the Lord Jesus and the saints who've gone before – with comfort, peace, and joy unspeakable

And when I think of Nate, I think of Romans 14:7-8; Where speaking to believers, the Apostle Paul says . . .

*None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself* [none of us lives for our own glory, or for our own end]. [8] *For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord* [whether in death or in life, it's for *his* glory and *his* purposes]. *So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.*

That was Nate's *life*, and that was Nate's *testimony*; And it still is; Only now, it's without the struggle; And we can praise God for that, even while we mourn (Pray?)

- That's the first thing; The second, (**title slide**) is that Becky and I just returned from the annual retreat with the other Harvest Senior Pastors . . .  
And I've never felt better about our Fellowship; From the camaraderie and unity, to the opportunities and fruit – God continues to bless the work of our hands

B/c of which, I have high hopes for the future

Which really shouldn't be a surprise, to either me or you, b/c that's what happens when God's at work; The very thing I want to talk about this weekend (**Intro**)  
When God's at work, expectations abound; There's a long list in Scripture

Like when God called Abraham – he had great expectations due to his promise of blessing  
As did the Israelites when God delivered them from Egypt 600 years later  
And Joshua on verge of Promise Land; And Saul when he was crowned as king  
And Solomon when he reigned over a vast empire  
And the people of God when they returned from Babylonian captivity – they had great expectations and high hopes

And the list goes on with those living at the time of Christ's birth; And then his resurrection 33 years later; And the formation of the early church at Pentecost  
Throughout the history of God's work of redemption, his people have had high hopes and great expectations for what he would do

- And the same is true now; Right here in *our* church; As we extend our reach with a campus in West Davenport . . .  
And expand our initiatives in various neighborhoods and ministries, and add to our building in the next few months, and look ahead to the years to come . . .  
Our hopes are high; And based on the example of the *first* church found in Acts 4, we have a really good idea of what to expect in ours; Acts 4:32-35

[32] *Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in*

*common.* [33] *And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.* [34] *There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold* [35] *and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.*

When God's at work, expect first of all . . .

#### **An increase in unity (v 32)**

We saw this *briefly* last week; V32 says that – *the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul*; They were close, likeminded, knit together

The very thing the Apostle *Paul* desired on the part of the church in Philippi, several years later; In **Phil 1:27** he says . . .

*Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel*

Put that together with the example in Acts, and you have a church that's unified\*\*\*\*\*

- And that unity is felt in more and more people, to a greater and greater degree  
IOW when God's at work, there's an increase in both the **extent** of the unity, and the depth of unity

Look at v32 again; It says that – *the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul*; Not just a few, but *all* of them

Which means there were no spectators, nobody slipping in the front door and slipping out the back, nobody on the sideline – they were all in; *All* of them

Is that true of every single person *here*? Not at all; But that's our goal; And it's certainly true of most; And constantly increasing

- But it often takes time, doesn't it? It takes *time* for people to feel comfortable and trust  
Sometimes b/c they don't even know the *Lord*, let alone us  
Other times it's b/c they're jaded/wounded, from a previous church; Maybe that's you  
And in a few cases, it's the result of years and years of pride, rebellion, and skepticism toward *any* kind of authority or organization  
Whatever the case, sometimes adding to the unity takes time; And that's okay as long as it's not the result of sin in your life, and doesn't drag on

- B/c in *our* experience, if you're here for 6 months and don't plug in to a Small Group or Service Team, you won't stay  
You'll start feeling disconnected, b/c you are; You'll feel out of it, b/c you are; You'll feel unknown, b/c you are; You'll feel purposeless and unappreciated, b/c you are

If you don't plug in, you won't stay

But if you do, you'll begin to see God at work, and come to expect more and more – more and more unity, to a greater extent

- But that's not all – you'll also experience an increase in the **depth** of unity  
The very thing that happened in the *early* church, b/c they rallied around the same goals  
Worshipping Christ, walking with Christ, and working for Christ – in every area of life  
Striving to glorify God in all they did, and reaching more people

That's what you *see* in the New Testament; They were consumed with the singular desire to advance the Kingdom of God; And it unified them (**Summary**)

That's what happens when God's at work

The only question is – are you a part of it? Or at least *headed* in that direction?

I hope you are; B/c it's a foretaste of glory divine as the old hymn says

2<sup>nd</sup>, when God's at work, expect . . .

**A surge in sacrifice (v 32)**

Once again, v32 says – *no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.*

That's not to say that the concept of private property was completely missing; It wasn't They had things that *belonged* to them, just like Luke says; That was normal, and still is

What isn't normal, is that they no longer considered those things their own, but shared them . . .

• **With one another**

It was an attitude that what's mine is *yours*, and what's yours is *mine*; Kind of like what Becky tells me every now and then in our marriage

Only she likes to say, tongue in cheek – “what's mine is hers, and what's hers is hers”

Which is just the opposite of how she is and lives, but it makes for a joke every now

and then; And a good reminder to me, as her husband, to lay down my life for her

To lead her and love her, by serving her with *all* that I have

In any case, when God's at work, you can expect a surge in sacrifice with one another

And . . .

• **For those in need**

Look at v34-35 – *There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold [35] and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.*

Those who had plenty, provided for those who had little – through the church

That's what happens when God's at work; And it's not limited to money

There's a surge in sacrifice for those in need of *time* as well; Like sitting with those who are sick; Or singing with the elderly; Or reading to the disabled

Or how about crying with those who mourn? It's a need

When God's at work, the sacrifice doesn't stop with the pocketbook

3<sup>rd</sup>, there's a surge in sacrifice . . .

• **Because of opposition**

Acts 4:1-3; Peter and John were preaching – *And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, [2] greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. [3] And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.*

That's opposition; But it backfired, didn't it? B/c the rest of the believers stepped up to the plate, and lived in such a way that couldn't be ignored

That's why the blood of martyrs is often referred to as the seed of the church – it spurs people on to even *more* love and good deeds

And though we may never die for our faith, we ought to live in such a way that if we did, it wouldn't be a surprise

When God's at work you can expect opposition, and a surge in sacrifice b/c of it

And then last here, you can expect a surge in sacrifice . . .

• **Due to high hopes**

Which takes us right back to the beginning; When you've seen the effect of God's work and people's sacrifice in the past, it spurs you on in the present

It's kind of like a football team with tons of talent and expectations of a championship – it creates a surge in sacrifice; Do you think the Super Bowl teams . . .

Have been sipping tea and eating bonbons the past 2 weeks? Not at all

Their high hopes for a ring have led to an even *greater* surge in sacrifice

And it's no different with the body of Christ

Like last week when we saw 84 people make a commitment to do whatever it takes to establish our West Davenport campus

To set up and tear down, week in and week out; To serve in multiple roles if needed

To worship one work one on different campuses if necessary; Whatever it takes

Why? B/c they have high hopes for what God will do in the lives of those who come

Which by the way, amounted to 186 people last week on Launch Sunday – in the middle of an ice storm no less; Take a look at this **video** (Launch Sunday)

When God's at work, you can expect an increase in unity, a surge in sacrifice, and . . .

**An outbreak of outreach (v 33)**

V33 says – *The apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus*

And as the church grew and spread, *everyone* was doing so

Like it says in **Acts 8:4** after the murder of Stephen, one of their leaders, and the persecution of Saul, and the scattering of the church

It says – *Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word*; There was an outbreak of outreach; B/c despite the hardship, God was at work

And when God's at work, you can't be quiet about it\*\*\*\*\*

• The best part of which, is that it's accompanied by *power*

V33 says – *with great power the apostles were giving their testimony*

Which just magnifies and *multiplies* the outbreak

B/c not only is the Holy Spirit at work within you to lead and guide, but the gospel *itself* is powerful – the power of salvation to everyone who believes (Rom 1:16)

One of the things you can add to your list of expectations when God is at work, is great *power* in outreach

It happened in their day, and it's happening in ours; In their church, and our church For instance, the word of God continues to increase – i.e. it's being proclaimed and received, more and more; And the number of disciples are multiplying . . .

And some of the most unlikely people are coming to Christ; It's happening

When God's at work, you can expect an outbreak of outreach, with great power to change lives

And the more it happens, the more you can't help but talk about it

Sharing your story about what God has done in *your* life, and in the lives of others  
I hope that's you; I hope you know the power of sharing the gospel; Of talking about  
changed lives

And then last, when God's at work, expect . . .

**A flood of favor (v 33)**

V33 says – *great grace was upon them all*; Great *favor*; An abundance of God's *goodness*  
A downpour of God's *blessing*; An outpouring of his *privilege*  
That's *grace*; And it *was upon them all*; All  
It's one of the benefits of belonging to the family of God  
And one of the things you can expect when God's at work

And no wonder; If there was an outbreak of outreach in *your* name . . .

And a surge of sacrifice for *your* kingdom; And an increase in unity for *your* purposes –  
you'd pour on the blessing too; You'd pour on the favor too

- Now, does that mean hardship/suffering will be *absent* when God's at work? Not at all  
In fact, most of the time there will be a mix – a mix of *grace* *and* difficulty; Simply due  
to the sin-stained, fallen world in which we live; Most of the time there's a mix  
And God uses it, all of it, to accomplish his work; Both *in* us, and around us  
That's *grace*; And sometimes, he actually *ordains* suffering to extend his favor

Like when David said to God in Ps 51 (v8) – *let the bones that you have broken rejoice*  
IOW let the pain that *you* have caused, turn into joy  
Sometimes God actually *uses pain*, to show us and give us more of his *grace*

- And let's be honest, if he didn't, we probably wouldn't even *see* half of God's *grace*, let  
alone appreciate it; It's difficulty in life that often draws *attention* to God's *grace*  
Like darkness draws attention to light; Have you ever thought of it that way?

For instance, if I were to light a candle in the room right now, you might not even notice  
it; B/c there's *already* a bunch of light; There's *already* an abundance of blessing  
But if I were to turn the lights **off** (black screen) – you'd see it for sure

And that's how *grace* is in the midst of hardship – it shines all the brighter; So that what  
seems like a trickle when things are good, is a flood when things are bad (**lights**)

- Don't miss it; Don't miss the flood of favor when God's at work; In good times *or* in  
bad; In your *own* life, or in our church  
Favor like the 20 decisions for Christ last week in the middle of an ice storm  
Or favor like the privilege of having a part in sending out 2 more pastors  
Or favor like the ability to add and upgrade our facilities through a build-out  
Or favor like the opportunity to impact so many lives, and see so many of them changed  
in the waters of baptism (**Summary**)  
It's a flood; And something you can expect when God's at work

Pray – Thank you for your work among us; Thank you for your *grace* upon us; Thank you  
for the unity we enjoy and the love we share; You're good to us; So find us increasingly  
faithful to share it with an outbreak of outreach

We give now, for that purpose and more; With thankful hearts and a love for you