

The Parish of Wellow

'Be Daring and Dynamic' 24 Studies in Acts Acts 5:17-42 – Responses to the truth about Jesus Passage, Talk Notes and Questions

Please feel free to take these talk notes home with you and you may wish to find some time during this week to consider the questions below.

1. Talk Passage

Acts 5:17-42

- 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.
27 Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest.
28 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."
29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!
30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead-- whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.
31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.
32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."
33 When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death.
34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honoured by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while.
35 Then he addressed them: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men.
36 Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing.
37 After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered.
38 Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail.
39 But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."
40 His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.
41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.
42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

2. Talk Notes

2.1 Introduction – 3 responses to the truth about Jesus

- At the heart of these verses is a question. A question that asks who Jesus is and what he came to do?
- We see three different responses:
 - i. From the Sadducees
 - ii. From Gamaliel
 - iii. From Peter, John and the apostles

2.2 The Sadducees response

- The Sadducees response to who Jesus was and what he had come to do is motivated by jealousy verse 17 *"Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy"*.
- It was jealousy that had motivated them to arrest the apostles and imprison them.
- Just like those Sadducees we too can be blinded by jealousy:
 - Someone gets noticed instead of us.
 - Someone gets an opportunity that we badly wanted.
 - Someone is given a promotion that we felt we deserved.

- Someone has a success that we do not share.
- Someone makes a purchase that we can't afford.
- Someone is given a gift that we would have liked to have received.
- Someone gets credit instead of us.
- The high priest and the Sadducees were presiding over a church that was ridden with man made rules and regulations. It was these that had become the focus rather than a relationship with God.
- So preoccupied were they with the rules and regulations, and the man made traditions that they miss the significance of the greatest person in human history namely Jesus.
- They are so jealous of what a group of common folk like Peter, John and the apostles are doing that they fail to listen to what Peter has told them Acts 4 verse 10 *"It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead that this crippled man stands before you healed."*
- It is often the case when those in authority see their power base being eroded that they lash out indiscriminately and without thinking.
- How often do we see that today? How often have we missed a new movement of the spirit because we are so shackled to tradition or man made rules and regulations.

2.3 Gamaliel's response

- Gamaliel a Pharisee and a teacher of the law clearly commands a great deal of respect both in the Sanhedrin and among the people verse 33.
- Gamaliel interestingly compares Jesus to Theudas and Judas the Galilean.
- Both Theudas and Judas the Galilean had their time of fame whilst Jesus was growing up. Each tried to start his own religious movement, and tried to overthrow the powers of Rome and thereby deliver Israel from the Roman Empire...but each of them failed. They were if you like "Messiah-wannabe's".
- What is fascinating is that Gamaliel compares Jesus to these two. This tells us a great deal about Gamaliel.
- As far as he is concerned Jesus might be just another Theudas or Judas of Galilee, just another revolutionary fanatic, just another insurrectionist, yet another flash in the pan!
- In his state of indecision he advises caution verse 38 *"Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."*
- Gamaliel's indecision saves the day and instead of the apostles being put to death verse 33 they are flogged verse 40 and go on to spread the good news about Jesus.
- How often do we meet people like Gamaliel today? People who have heard about Jesus, people who may well have seen God act in great power but are just not willing to make a final decision about him.

2.4 Peter, John and the apostles response

- Peter, John and the apostles however know the truth about Jesus verses 30 and 31 *"The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead. God exalted him (Jesus) to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel."*
- Peter, John and the apostles are convinced that Jesus is the Son of God and that he came to forgive sins.
- Jesus commands them to go out and spread that good news. That is why they reply to the Sanhedrin with those famous words verse 29 *"We must obey God rather than men!"*
- What a challenge that is to us all. Here are these common folk standing up against the religious authorities of the day and telling them that they have misunderstood the true identity of Jesus.
- How willing are we to stand up against similar authorities today and tell them that they too have misunderstood the true identity of Jesus.
- Would we be willing to receive a flogging and to walk away with the words of verse 41 *"They apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name of Jesus."*
- We too are called to spread the good news about who Jesus is and what he came to do. Each one of us in our way can do that every day. Every day we can witness to that truth.
- That is what the early church has a passion for verse 42 *"Day after Day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ."*
- What would happen here in Wellow if we all had a similar passion and desire?

3. Coffee 'n' Stickies Questions

- 3.1 Why do the Sadducees fail to respond to the truth about Jesus? Can we think of some modern day equivalents?
- 3.2 How do we ensure both as a church and as individuals that we are moving with God's spirit?
- 3.3 What do you think about Gamaliel's advice to the Sanhedrin?
- 3.4 How far should we as a church and as individuals go to stand up for the truth about Jesus?
- 3.5 A friend of yours says to you one day that her beliefs are between her and God. How would you respond?

Please join us at **Coffee 'n' Stickies** Monday 10th July 7.45pm at the Vicarage to discuss the questions further.