

## Acts, Sermon #10

18 years

Missions Pastor

Missions Philosophy and Policy is:

To train indigenous pastors in America, India, Moldova and China

Acts 4

Acts – This book records the history of the early church.

Acts 4 begins with the first persecution of the church.

- Peter and John were arrested for preaching Jesus Christ and His resurrection.
- Peter and John were interrogated and eventually released.
- They reported to the church people.

Then God gives to us a description of the daily life of the early church. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> time that God fills us in to what was happening. The first time was at the end of Acts 2. Breaks from the story narrative

I have entitled today's message: **“Working the Plan of Jesus”**

Acts 4:32

Let us stand for the reading of God's Holy Word.

Acts 4:32 – 5:5

Let us pray.

You may be seated.

MCBC	May 09
Arlington Baptist Church	May 09
Blue Ridge Baptist	June 09
Kingston, NC	June 09
Goldsboro, NC	June 09
Crossroads, NE	June 09

## “Working the Plan of Jesus”

According to vs. 32, the early church enjoyed an unusual unity. The unity of the church is emphasized in vs. 32.

The number of men in the church had increased around 5,000 men (Acts 4:4). Add wives and children and we have the first mega church in history, The Jerusalem Church.

The Bible calls them a multitude – vs. 32.

This first church was a diverse group of people, from all over the world. The church is made up of diverse people in all shapes, sizes, and colors.

Secondly, they are described as believers, vs. 32.

- They were believers in Jesus Christ. The church is made up of believers, Acts 5:14.
- Believers are born again, saved people.

Just because a person goes to church does not make them a believer. There are many today that look like a believer, talk like a believer but the Lord will say to them, “I never knew you, depart from me ye workers of iniquity.” The Lord knoweth them that are His. You can fool people but you can’t fool God.

How did these folks become believers?

- These people had heard preaching regarding a person named Jesus Christ – His suffering / death / and resurrection.
- They were told their part in crucifying Him and told to repent and believe on Him and their sins would be forgiven.
- They responded with belief / faith, realizing who they were, sinners, guilty, condemned. . . .who Jesus is
- Jesus Christ is the only Savior and there are no alternate saviors.

Then God describes the believers (vs. 32) -- **One heart and soul.**

- Their unity centered on Jesus Christ.
- Their belief that Jesus was who He said He was, Son of God, The Messiah, The Anointed One; resurrected from the dead, the Savior of the world.

Their belief in Christ bound the diversity together. Their common belief was not just in a creed. Often times, that is what joins the congregation together, common beliefs.

Many go to a church because of the music, children's programs, sports team, preacher, Constitution/Doctrinal Statement and so our commonness is over what we believe. The early churches unity goes far deeper than a piece of paper and doctrinal beliefs.

The unity that is recorded here is an example for our church.

When the scripture speaks of them, it is saying that the congregation had one passion in life.

The body has one heart and one soul. A large church with **one personality, one heart. One great passion!**

All of this centers on a central figure, "Jesus Christ." Christocentric, Acts 4:12.

- Christianity is the worship of a person. It is identification with Jesus Christ in life and purpose.
- Christianity is more than a belief in a system. It is belief in a person, crucified and risen again. Jesus Christ is in the center of Christianity's message and movement.

No founder of any religion has ever placed himself so completely into the center of His message and movement as Christ did.

No man has ever said, “I am the light of the world..., I am the door..., I am the way, the truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me..., I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.”

These are astounding – incredible claims. Yet, the man Christ Jesus made them.

He is absolutely Christocentric in His claims and presentation.

- No mortal has ever said, “I and my Father are one..., the Father is in me, and I in him..., he that hath seen me hath seen the Father..., all power [authority] has been given unto me in heaven and in earth..., the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.”

**Col. 2:3 & 9**, *In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

The Bible puts a person, the person known as Jesus Christ, the Lord, into the center of all salvation.

**Matt.11:28**, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

Jesus Christ is presented to us in the Bible as God. Jesus Christ is Lord and is God; He is worshipped and honored by all believers of the Bible, deity and humanity in one person, born the Christ Child, Emanuel.

**I Tim. 3:16**, *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh,*

**I Cor. 5:19**, *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,*

Congregations and pastors are so fickle today. Here today and gone tomorrow!

Commitment and loyalty and sustained group effort seems to be things of the past.

What would it be like if all the church people were unified in a common goal for a common purpose? The glorification of God through an obedient life style (Holy Living), engaged in the local church to evangelize, disciple and reproduce ourselves.

We ought to have the same desire as Christ – The Same mind as Christ.

1. We want to see people saved.
2. We want to see people baptized.
3. We want to see people grow in the Lord.
4. We want to see the church expand and send out pastors and start new churches.

These are the things that should thrill us, excite us and bind us together.

We live in a culture where church is more about individuals than about the entire body.

What can the church offer me and my family?

When we have unity – that means death to our wills and wants and desires.

**Deny yourselves!** Take up our cross and follow Me.

Jesus told us to, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Seek ye first the Lord’s rule in our life.

If that is true, we should be:

- Attending church faithfully, joyfully, not just on Sunday morning – Wednesday nights
- We will be singing, giving, participating
- Reading the Bible and living it out, soulwinners, teachers of others.

There are many that are unified in heart and purpose. But, there are many who are not and need to be.

In Acts 5 – We have a couple who pretended to be sold out for Jesus but they were liars.

Are you sold out for the Lord Jesus Christ? Is He first place in your life? If He walked through those doors and looked you eyeball to eyeball, could you say to Him, “You are first in my life and my decisions. I live my life for you”?

Jesus prayed in John 17:21, “*That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*”

Now to what extent was the unity of the early church? Vs. 32 immediately takes us to the subject of their possessions.

Our possessions tell on us. Our money and the way we use it gives evidence of our heart.

Materialism is destroying us in the West. We see it in the economic disaster we find ourselves in as a country. Our money reads, “In God we trust” but the truth is we trust in our money.

Jesus told us that, “*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” (Matthew 6:21).

If we are going to be followers of Christ, it requires sacrifice; money, time, life.

- Their possessions were available to God and God’s work and God’s people.
- If God needed it, it’s available. If the church people need it, it is available.

This unity is being recorded as a virtue of these believers.

What was that one passion that they had?

- They already expressed it in their speech and in their prayer, vs. 29.
- One in soul and one in heart about accomplishing the mission they had been given by Jesus Christ, Acts 1:8, witnesses unto Jesus Christ

What was their mission? “Ye shall be witnesses.”

The explosive power of a new affection—love. Love for the world was pushed down—love for Christ was paramount.

The mission of Christ, the mission of the church, had expelled the love of everything else.

The spirit of God had come in like the ocean waves and swept off the table all selfishness, and **me**-isms – all personal agendas – and the church was focused on Christ and His work.

When was the last time we shared Jesus Christ with someone else? Who have we witnessed to about Jesus Christ?

Now notice vs. 33. It records two things that were great among them. Greatness in two areas:

1. With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

- Twelve apostles

By the way, who is feeding them and providing for their needs?

Right away, the church was responsible for these 12 adult men. Those apostles were able to give themselves unreservedly to the mission they had been given.

2. Great grace was upon them all—such an over-flowing of the church. God's grace flowed through them to others.

Undeserved blessing – that's living.

When the loving kindness of God pours out of us and our church

**“Working the Plan of Jesus”**

Let us stand for closing invitation

Every eye closed.

Hypocritical Christian living was not tolerated in the early church.

Unified believers in Christ fulfilling the commands of Christ

Are we all unified in this purpose and endeavor?

Is this the heart beat of our home and life?

Are you a believer or just a church attender?

Have you repented of your personal sins and trusted in a real person named Jesus  
Christ as your personal Savior?