

## Acts 4:23-37

### What Makes the Church Great?

#### Recap of where we have been

Acts 1 – Go wait Holy Spirit come upon you!

Acts 2 Holy Spirit poured out –  
1<sup>st</sup> sermon – 3,000 souls

Core Values –

- **The Word- talking about Jesus**
- **Fellowship – Gathering around Jesus**
- **Communion – Remembering the work of Jesus**
- **Prayer – Talking to Jesus**
- **Worship – praising Jesus**
- **Evangelism – Telling others about Jesus**

Acts 3 1<sup>st</sup> Miracle  
Opposition  
Arrested – Warned – Released

That is where we are picking up the story here in V.23 of Chapter 4

Answer the question tonight – **What makes for a great Church!**

#### #1 The right pursuit

23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: ‘Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things?

26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.’

27 “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. 29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and

wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.”

31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

#### What makes for a great Church?

##### #1 The Right Pursuit!

A) Notice that verse 23 does not say, then being let go, they, rallied together, stormed the Antonia Fortress,

B) Or They wrote a letter to the editor of the Jerusalem Post.

##### C) They didn't protest, they prayed.

1) They gathered together, and they appealed to God.

D) They were active. They were activists, but they were spiritual activists.

E) They got together, and they prayed to the Lord for the world that had persecuted them,

##### Great example for us – First pursuit was to pray!

A) For the early church – prayer was not a last resort  
It was a first resort!

B) It was one of the things that made for a great church –

1) they were dedicated and committed to Prayer

C) Here is why- #2 The Right Perspective OF GOD

##### They believed in a BIG GOD!!! It says that they raised their voice and said, Lord You are God.

A) The word Lord is the Greek word despota or despote, the **autocrat of the universe, the ruler of everything.**

B) We're not speaking to somebody who is weak.

1) We're not talking into the air.

C) We're not talking to somebody with **ONLY earthly authority.**

1) We are talking to the Sovereign God/ nothing is too hard for

**Now the Bible says that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God – Romans 10:17**

A) So the Bible tells us in Jeremiah 29:11

**11 For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.**

B) GOD CARES ABOUT YOU!

1) Thoughts outnumber the sand!

C) Do you believe that? – If you do then you should follow v.12 **Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. LORD,**

D) He is the God who hears!

**When you realize – who you are praying to – it elevates your prayers**

A) it inspires faith- Pray big prayers!

**“God honors bold prayers, because bold prayers honor God” - Mark Batterson**

B) Here is how some people pray- Lord not sure if you are up there – not sure if you care

1) Not sure if you are listening – but if you are – could you do this for me.

**C) That Kind of prayer is insulting to God – He is there – He is listening – He DOES CARE!**

**The early Church was a great Church because they had the right perspective of God!**

A) He is the Sovereign Lord of the Universe!

B) Nothing too big for Him to Handle

1) Nothing too small for him to be concerned about

C) You have a cold? - that concerns him!

1) Not too small

D) A diagnosis of Cancer – that is not too big!

**See it is important to have the right perspective about God!**

A) Notice that they quote Psalm 2. Who by, verse 25, the mouth of Your servant, David, has said. Now, it's a direct quote out of Psalm 2,

B) but I'm going to show you a little difference.

They quote, why did the nations rage and the people plot vain things. The kings of the earth took their

stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ.

C) But if you were to look at the actual translation in your Bible, in Psalm 2 it says, **they've gathered together against the Lord and against His anointed.**

1) Here they use the word Christ because it's the same word.

**The Hebrew word, in the second Psalm, for anointed is meshiach or messiah.**

A) And Christ is the English equivalent of Christos in the Greek, which is the equivalent of the Hebrew meshiach.

B) So anointed, messiah, Christos, Christ, it's all the same.

1) Psalm 2 is the first of 16 Messianic Psalms in the book of Psalms

C) So they realized that Psalm was about JESUS!

**They quote a messianic Psalm, the first of the psalms that is considered messianic.**

A) They're praying realizing that God is the autocrat of the universe, MADE & controls everything,

B) WHO even predicted that what is happening in Jerusalem that day was predicted in the scripture.

C) People gathered together against the Lord's anointed!

1) **Partial - Fulfillment to the times they were living in**

**D) Ultimate fulfillment would be when at the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ – Revelation 19**

E) See they are going to bring a request but before they do – it is important that they knew who they were talking to!

**Right perspective results in having the #3 They have the Right Petition:**

29 Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word

**1<sup>st</sup> Boldness v.29**

A) This is worth noticing – because – I think the natural tendency would have been the pray that the persecution would stop –

B) Lord defeat enemies – stop it

C) But Jesus had told them – Don't be surprised – the world hates you it hated me

Luke 21:12 "But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake

John 15:20

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master ' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you;

D) Jesus told them – difficulty was coming

1) So they are not praying that he takes it away – they understood – comes with the territory

E) So they Prayed – for BOLDNESS TO SPEAK THE WORD!

DO you find that convicting?

A) We have this tendency to pray – make it easier Lord –

B) Even though the Bible tells us that we should expect trials –

1) trials = growth and maturity

C) If we believe that – We say: Lord bring it on – we find ourselves leaning into the trials

1) Not begging for them to be taken from our lives

D) "Don't pray for a light load pray for a stronger back"

E) So first they prayed for boldness -

2<sup>nd</sup> Prayed for Power , 30 by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus."

This tells me that they were a group of people who wanted to make a difference!

A) Pray for God to do great things – Manifest his power

B) God we believe that in and through the name of Jesus you are willing and able to do great things!

C) Manifest your power – by healing – signs and wonders – Lord do miracles.

We sing that he is the God of miracles – but do we believe that ?

A) DO we pray that way?

B) "One of the biggest reasons that most people don't experience miracles is because most people are not willing to put themselves in situations that necessitate them." – Mark Batterson

C) The people in the early church realized if Jesus didn't show up big time – they would be wiped out!

1) If Jesus didn't show up big time they were never going to make an impact in this world!

D) Ever day for them was a risk – and I think if we were willing to take more risk we might see more miracles!

E) So they prayed for boldness and they prayed for Power!

Result:

31 And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.

Note this: Filled with the Holy Spirit references and what it produces

A) Luke 1:67 - Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied

Luke 4:1 Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness,

Acts 2:4 Filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues

Acts 4:8 Peter filled with the Holy Spirit – spoke with boldness to the Rulers

Here Acts 4:31 they were all filled with the Holy Spirit they spoke the word with Boldness

**The Filling of the Holy Spirit results in something!**

**#1 They have Right Pursuit**

**#2 They have Right perspective of God**

**#3 They have the Right Petition:**

**#4 The Right Heart**

32 Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.

**A)They had a unity of heart and soul.**

**B)The heart and soul represents the most intimate parts of our being**

1)The church in Acts was united in the deepest part of its being.

**C)Some love to look at this through the eyes of socialism.**

1)And say, see the early church, this was the pure form of communism. They couldn't be more wrong.

**D)This is not communism. This is common-ism, and there is a huge difference,**

1)a massive disparity between communism and common-ism.

**Communism is enforced. Common-ism is voluntary.**

**A)Communism says, what's yours is mine.**

**B)Common-ism says, what's mine is yours.**

1)That was the early church.

**C)The early church was untied in their focus – their goals –their pursuits**

1)Miraculous considering they came from so many different parts of the country

**D)They rallied around Jesus!**

**A. W. Tozer:** “Has it ever occurred to you that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other?”

They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to another standard to which each one must individually bow.”

**That is what makes for a great Church – a group of people who are individually tuned to Jesus – result they are tuned to one another!**

**This does not mean these believers saw eye to eye on everything.**

**A)But they were focused on what mattered – and they realize what didn't matter.**

**B)The Result of their Right heart!**

➤ **The Word went out in power**

33 And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

**C)Because they were all focused on the right thing – The Apostles were free to preach –**

1)free to devote themselves to the Word – the gospel to outreach

**D)Sometimes – we spend all our time in the church –putting out fires and squabbles –**

**The Result of their right heart!**

➤ **Great grace was upon them all**

**Great Grace= Mega grace - Grace is God's favor, His smile from heaven, and it was upon them all.**

**God's favor was evident everywhere.**

**The Result of their Right heart!**

➤ **People's needs were taken care of- Spirit of Generosity**

34 Nor **was there anyone among them who lacked;** for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed **to each as anyone had need.**

**Now I want you to note something here: There wasn't anyone AMONG THEM who lacked**

**A)The among them is key here: Context is with in the family of the early Church**

**B)The focus was first and foremost in the context of taking care of those win the body of Christ.**

**C)The funds were given to the apostles who in turn gave them out according to the needs in the body**

**Now I am not suggesting that we shouldn't try and care for the poor who are outside of the church.**

A) We definitely should – a great way to share the love of Jesus!

B) but our first priority is to take care of the needy within the church.

C) That is Key! – First Priority – We follow that model here at CV

**Now in V.36-37 We are introduced to one my favorite people in the Bible!**

A) He is a great example of this heart of Generosity

36 And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, 37 having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

B) So there is this guy from the Island of Cyprus he is a Levite. –

1) Gets saved – **He has a heart to bless others**

C) He realized what many of us forget – He was blessed to be a blessing.

**Now some of you Bible students here might have been thrown by the fact that Barnabas owned land**

A) Familiar with the book of Numbers 18, where it talks about Levites not having any portion of the land of Israel,

B) The reason was because God is their portion,

1) So what's the deal with this? Is this a backslidden Levite?

C) Not so fast – the commandment was that the Levites were not supposed to own land in Israel

1) Said nothing about when they were outside of Israel

D) The Island of Cyprus is not in Israel

**Also we have no idea how he got this land – was it given to him?**

A) Was it part of the package when he married his wife?

B) The Bible doesn't condemn him for owning property –

1) But rather commends him for that he did with it

**He is such an encouragement that although his name is Joses or Joseph**

A) They give him the name of Barnabas = son of encouragement

B) He pops up over and over again in that capacity in the book of Acts – Encouraging others

1) Coming along side of others – Paul – John Mark

**C) We need more guys and gals like Barnabas in the Church today!**

1) Realize – blessed to be a blessing – who want to help encourage others

D) Barnabas is a great guy to study and model your life after!

**What makes for a great Church?**

#1 They have Right Pursuit

#2 They have Right perspective of God

#3 They have the Right Petition:

#4 They have Right Heart

Result:

- They were filled with the Holy Spirit
- The Word went out in power
- Great grace was upon them all
- People's needs were taken care of - Spirit of Generosity