



Western Hills Church – July 5, 2020

Message: “Messenger” [Put up the Warrior screen]

Acts 5:12-42 (the Story) [*Background – early church - Ch. 5, Ananias and Sapphira; vss. 11-16 – signs and wonders; after the story Acts 6-7, Stephen’s message, and stoning*]

BG - The manifestation of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost and Peter’s first sermon, to explain the effects and share the Gospel.

The healing of a lame man and Peter’s second sermon (to the amazed crowd that had formed), another presentation of the Gospel, along with the arrest of Peter and John, who were threatened (from speaking in the name of Jesus), and then released (no chargeable offense and for fear of the crowd who saw the miracle).

And this is where the story begins...

Acts 5:12-42

[Vss. 1-11 Ananias and Sapphira] – short prelude to the story...

Vss. 12-16 Many signs and wonders were performed at the hands of the apostles [laid the sick in the streets to catch Peter’s shadow; (vss. 15-16, ...they were all being healed)] which God used to bring approval for the church); believers, men and women, were being added to their number; there were many who “dared to associate with them” while many “held them in high esteem.”

Vss. 17-21a The high priest rose up, with his associates, the Sadducees (who didn’t believe in the resurrection of the dead) because they were filled with jealousy.

They laid hands on them (“the apostles”) and put them in a public jail.

During the night, an angel of the Lord (His messenger! Not Peter’s guardian angel operating on his own) opened the gates of the prison (unbeknownst to the guards!) and took them out. He told them, “Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life.”

Upon hearing this they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Pause the Story

So what was the message of these messengers? Assuming Peter was among them, it might have gone something like this (like the day of Pentecost). After explaining the presence of the Holy Spirit through Joel's prophecy (2:28-31) in the OT.

- He presents Jesus, as affirmed by God (affirmed the apostles the same) through the miracles, wonders, and signs He performed through Jesus "in their midst."
- He was delivered over by the "predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God."
- They nailed Him to the cross by the hands of godless men and He died.
- God raised Him up again "putting an end to the agony of death" since it was impossible for Him to be held in death's power!
- This resurrection was spoken of by David in Psalm 16:8-11
- He declared that David both died and was buried ("the tomb is with us to this day") however, the Christ would not be abandoned to Hades or suffer decay.
- God raised Jesus up which they all had witnessed.
- He has been exalted to the right hand of God.
- They had received the Father's promise of the Holy Spirit, which they both see and hear!
- "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:36)

The Gospel Message!

God loves to send messengers! Sometimes He speaks directly to them...

Moses – in the burning bush and later at Mount Sinai

The Prophets (who were messengers) – ex. Jonah to Nineveh, Isaiah to Israel

Jesus – to Saul on the road to Damascus

Holy Spirit – to us?

And sometimes He sends a messenger...

An angel of the Lord (Luke identifies him as Gabriel) is identified as the one who spoke to Zacharias, John the Baptist's father and to Mary. Though Matthew doesn't name him, it is assumed Gabriel also spoke to Joseph in a dream.

John the Baptist, The prophesied forerunner of the Messiah

God's son would be the greatest messenger

Jesus, "when you've seen me you've seen the Father." **John 1:14** – "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth." **Hebrews 1:3** – "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature." **2 Cor. 4:4** - "The image of God..."; **2 Cor. 4:6** - "...[we see] the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

We've been in a study called "Warrior: Winning the Fight for Faith." I'd like to propose that the concept of being a messenger of the Message (the Gospel) is not unlike military operations.

"War is not an affair of chance. A great deal of knowledge, study, and meditation is necessary to conduct it well." A warrior

"Now the reason the enlightened prince and the wise general conquer the enemy whenever they move and their achievements surpass those of ordinary men is foreknowledge." —Sun Tzu, The Art of War

Battles are won through foreknowledge...

The Army uses an acronym...**METT-T** [Marines do same] to gain foreknowledge.

- **Mission** – what is it?
- **Enemy** – what is known about? Size; location; strategy.
- **Terrain** – how will it and the weather affect the operation? [Environment of the battlefield]
- **Troops** – who is available and trained (prepared to go wherever the Commander says)?
- **Time** – how much time is available?

MISSION: Advance of the Kingdom of God (Kingdom of Heaven)

Daniel 2:44 – [BG is Daniel's making known and interpreting king Nebuchadnezzar's dream] "In the days of those kings (Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome) the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever" (Daniel 4:34 [Nebuchadnezzar] "...His kingdom endures from generation to generation.").

Jesus preached the Kingdom of Heaven, what it is like (its value), who will enter it and who will not enter it, throughout His ministry. “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

It was the message of the Church: Acts 8:12 – “But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.” **Acts 19:8** – [Paul] “And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.” **Acts 28:23** – “When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.” That is our mission!

ENEMY: There is only one. **Ephesians 6:12** “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” And his strategies are known. Who is not the enemy...democrats, abortionists, criminals, haters of America, etc. (Saul was a killer in the name of religion).

TERRAIN: **Your environment, your influence**, is distinctive to any other. There are those in whose lives you have influence where I have none; and I have influence in areas which you do not (i.e. workplaces, neighborhoods, skills, and hobbies, etc.). You have been uniquely prepared for the mission.

TROOPS: **Are you an available and “trained” troop?** Are you prepared to go wherever the Commander says? A good commander 1) anticipates the conflict, 2) established a strategy and knows how to effectively use his troops, 3) communicates to subordinates. Our Commander, Jesus, knew of the conflict before He created man; He set forth a strategic plan with the Father for victory and has, throughout history, effectively moved His people (troops) to advance the Kingdom; He communicates to His people...He wants to be known!

TIME: It seems like there is always a lot of time, to study, to plan, to train, etc. The military will take a lot of time for these activities, but **at some point, the mission begins**. We watched the production of Noah in Branson last weekend. Though we have no idea how long it took Noah to build the Ark (estimates range from 20-75 years), we do know that it was 120 years from God’s decree of judgment to the Flood. From what we know of biblical prophecy, Jesus could return at any time! So, time is short.

Battles are won through foreknowledge, and that is why we depend on God’s messengers!

Here in our story we have the messenger (the angel of the Lord) sending messengers!

How about the rest of the story?

Vss. 21b-42

The high priest calls for the Council (associates; the whole Senate of the sons of Israel) and sent orders to the prison house for them to be brought.

The officers who came did not find them in prison, though it was locked and secure with the guards standing by the doors. When they opened up, there was no one there! They were quite confused!!

Someone came and reported, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!" So the captain of the guard and the officers of the Jewish court proceeded to bring them back, without violence for fear of the crowd (who might stone them), again.

The high priest questions them before the Council: "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

Peter and the apostles answered, READ vss. 29-32, "We must obey God..."

When they heard this, they were cut to the quick and intended to kill them (their standard operating procedure – do away with the evidence).

Gamaliel (a Pharisee, the one who taught Saul!) speaks!

Ordered the men out of the room.

"Take care what you propose to do to these men..." Discusses false teachers – Theudas (with a group of 400 men who joined him) who eventually was killed and his followers dispersed; Judas of Galilee in the days of the census, who perished and his followers scattered.

"So in this present case, stay away from these men and leave them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found fighting against God."

They took his advice, though after calling the apostles back in, they were flogged and ordered not to speak in the name of Jesus. They were then released.

They went their way "rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

Everyday in the temple and from house to house they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. [Acts 6-7, Stephen's message and stoning]

That is the story!

What does this mean for us?

If you are a believer today, who was the messenger(s) that the Lord used in your life? Take a moment and thank Him.

What can we learn about messengers from the story?

- God's earthly messengers are regular people. Gamaliel recognized this.
- Messengers are committed to knowing God, His person, His ways, and His mission (the K of G).
- Messengers are available and obedient. Trust the Commander (Giver of the message) for He is all-knowing!
- Messengers represent, with all authority, the One giving the message.
- If a messenger is rejected, the One who sent him/her was rejected first.
- WE ARE THE MESSENGERS

Malachi 2:7 – “For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts” [Do we really understand this?]. **1 Peter 2:9** – “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” **2 Corinthians 8:23** – “As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brethren, they are messengers of the churches, a glory to Christ.”

And what of the Message?

- The Message hasn't changed through the ages (Early church, the church fathers, the Middle Ages, the Colonial Period and the founding of the nation, the wars, presently).
- The Message can become distorted (see Gal. 2:24; Phil 3:2; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Jn 4:1).
- The OT stories support and give light to the Message (storying in small groups).
- The Message will be received by some but will more likely be rejected. **Matthew 7:13** – “...for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.” Jesus' response to the rejectors? “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood

under her wings, and you would not have it (were unwilling)! **Luke 13:34** (Matthew 23:37); "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." **Luke 23:34**

"Your Word Will Be the Last Word" [See attached lyrics]

Be a messenger of that Word!

Your Word Will Be the Last Word

Verse 1

Your Word will be the last word
Your promises will stand forevermore
Man's thoughts and all his plans
Will come to an end
But Your Word will be the last word

Verse 2

Your Word says I'm forgiven
Your covenant says You will always be with me
And though some may scoff and write me off
Your Word will be the last word

Verse 3

Your Word is my guiding light
Your promises guide me in the deepest darkest night
Though troubles come and go in my heart I'll always know
Your Word will be the last word

BRIDGE

Man in all his wisdom and all his foolish pride
Puts his hope in sonly things he can see with his eyes
Claiming to be wise they became as fools instead
But Lord I'm banking all my faith on the truths of what You've said

Verse 4

Your Word will be the last word
Your promises will stand forever and ever and evermore
Man's thoughts and plans they will come to an end
But Your Word will be the last word
Your word will be the last word