

1) INTRO

- The story's told of two men who met on a plane and one man asked the other, "Are you a Christian?"
"Yes I am."
- "Wonderful! Are you Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox?"
"I'm a Protestant."
- "That's great. So am I. Are you a *Calvinist* or an *Arminian*?"
"I'm happy to say that I'm a Calvinist."
- "That's fantastic. So am I. If you don't mind my asking, are you a Calvinistic *Baptist* or a Calvinistic *Presbyterian*?"
"I'm a Calvinistic Baptist."
- "Great. I'm a Calvinistic Baptist, too. Are you a *Northern* Calvinistic Baptist or a *Southern* Calvinistic Baptist?"
"By heritage and by choice I am a Northern Calvinistic Baptist."
- "Unbelievable! So am I. May I ask if you are a Northern *Regular* Calvinistic Baptist or a Northern *Conservative* Calvinistic Baptist?"
"I'm a Northern Conservative Calvinistic Baptist."
- "This is truly astounding. There's only 200 of us in the world—and two of us happened to meet on this plane. Tell me, sir, would you happen to be a Northern Conservative Calvinistic Baptist *Convention of 1844* or a Northern Conservative Calvinistic Baptist *Convention of 1868*?"
"I am a Northern Conservative Calvinistic Baptist Convention of 1844."
- "This is a miracle! Are you a Northern Conservative Calvinistic Baptist Convention of 1844 *King James Version* or a Northern Conservative Calvinistic Baptist Convention of 1844 *New International Version*?"
"I am a Northern Conservative Calvinistic Baptist of 1844 New International Version."
- With that the first man ceased to smile, turned away, and refused to speak any further to that heretic.
- As much as we'd hate to admit it, the Church is too often like this, isn't it?
 - We're quick to judge and disassociate with those who have different Bible translation preferences, different music preferences, different schooling preferences, different family size preferences, different...
 - While differences are normal and natural and even good and helpful at times, the tragedy's when those differences divide and lead to disunity
- As people, in general, we can be quick to split hairs, can't we?
 - We can find so many areas that we agree with each other on, but when there's a point of preference that's different, we can so easily make that preference a priority
 - Division and disunity's a great danger for Christians
 - We split hairs and then we split churches and our witness to the world crumbles as unchurched people see division in the church
- But, this isn't what happened in the life of the church in the book of Acts
 - We see a picture of unity rather than disunity
 - We see a common heart/a common mission/a common commitment/a common desire to worship and live for God that outweighs individual preferences
 - We see a unity that existed among them, as a body/as a family/as a church...they were known for their unity and that led to the further proclamation of the work of JC

- And, as NT Christians who submit to the Lordship of JC in our lives and who trust in the completed work of JC in saving our souls and giving us eternal life...we know that we're filled with the same HS
- We're given the same HS-power that enables us to live in unity and shine for JC
- So, we'll see today that **the HS unites us in the Gospel so that our love for each other reflects the power of JC**

2) THE UNITY OF IMPERFECT PEOPLE (v32)

- [read v32]
- We see that they're "of one heart and soul" (v32)
 - As we've walked through Acts already, we've seen the church grow in great numbers
 - And, as the church here in Acts has grown in great numbers, those who make up the church in the book of Acts are already from a wide range of backgrounds and ethnicities
 - Look back at Acts 2:9-11 (this was just a few days before 3,000 were converted) and the HS came upon this multitude..."Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians..."
 - Yet, even with this huge diversity among them, they were unified
 - They had different backgrounds/different cultures/different customs...and varying preferences come with that
 - But, they were still unified..."of one heart and soul"
 - This doesn't mean they were all the same kind of person though
 - R Kent Hughes – "It is wrong to suppose, as sadly some do, that when believers dwell in unity they will carry the same Bible, read the same books, promote the same styles, educate their children the same way, have the same likes and dislikes – that they will become Christian clones."
 - They weren't Christian clones and they were sinful, imperfect people as well
 - The only perfect person to walk the earth was our Lord and Savior, JC
 - These early believers weren't perfect...and they weren't super-Christians either
 - They were sinful and flawed just as we are
 - But, they were united in heart and soul
 - Ezekiel 11:19-20 – God says "I will give them [i.e. His people] one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God."
 - And, this is what's going on here in our text today
 - These imperfect, sinful believers with huge differences in cultures and backgrounds and preferences were given a new heart that beat in unison for God
 - And, their hearts beat as one b/c God was now their God...no longer did their different preferences and backgrounds guide them
 - The sovereign, almighty God led them into unity as they walked out their HS-powered faith in obedience to God together
 - We see that here that effect of being spirit-filled people means that we'll be united in the Gospel together
 - We'll have a common love for God and for each other

- And, that'll outweigh any personal preferences or backgrounds when we seek to live in community and fellowship with our brothers and sisters
- The early believers here were living in unity together as they loved God well and as they loved each other well too
- We see that they had everything in common (v32)
 - This phrase "they had everything in common" shows the extent of their deep commitment to each other
 - And, that deep commitment to each other's rooted in their unity of love for JC and in their love for each other
 - They were willing to sell land and possessions in order to take care of each other
 - This is a picture of believers taking care of believers
 - This phrase isn't given as a command...it doesn't carry the function of a command
 - But, it's given as evidence of their identification with each other
 - This phrase shows their unity as commendable
 - Their deep commitment for each other revealed itself in how they took care of each other as we see throughout out text today
 - Unity in love for the Jesus who saves us of our sin will naturally lead us to love each other
 - And, our love for each other flows into a deep desire to care for each other
- As NT believers – who're also filled with the HS when we know and acknowledge that salvation comes only in Jesus – we'll be able to live in this same way
 - And, we'll desire to live in this way
 - We'll desire to care for each other
 - We'll desire to love on each other in spite of the differences we have b/c our unity in our common salvation in Jesus is more important
 - We have a common connection and bond with each other just simply by the very fact that we're Christians/followers of Christ
 - Have you ever just met someone and then, in conversation, found out that they're a Christian too?
 - You feel a deep connection with this stranger right away, don't you?
 - In Christ, we're connected on a deep and sweet and intimate level
 - And, how much more true is that of us who live in community with each other week-in and week-out/day-in and day-out
 - Our love for each other leads us to actively care for each other as believers
 - Our love for each other/our display of affection for each other/our caring for each other's our witness to a lost world
 - We see this in v33

3) THE TESTIMONY OF UNITY (v33)

- [read v33]
- We see this verse sandwiched here in the midst of the discussion of unity in the church and love for each other...we see it's a verse about evangelism
 - Ajith Fernando – "Because community life is never and end in itself"
 - Just sitting back and being in comfortable community's not the goal
 - God's wanting to show us here that there was never a time when the church didn't evangelize

- As a church of people who're transformed by the life-changing and life-saving work of Jesus, we're consistently and constantly pointing others to Jesus as well...to the Gospel message
 - The goal's to point lost souls to Jesus – the God-man/God-in-flesh who came to the earth to bring us back to right relationship with God
 - B/c we're all people who sin each and every day and our sin must be punished by God and we're not worthy of being in the presence of God b/c of our sin
 - But, Jesus died for our sins in order to show his power and authority and dominion over sin
 - That he died but, as God, didn't stay dead
 - He rose from the dead
 - And, now when we say, "You, Jesus – the powerful one who defeated death and grave – reign and rule over my sin, and I trust in your power over sin", we're given salvation and life
- This is the power of the early church that we see here
 - They were living out the resurrected power of the Lord JC
 - They didn't let their sin get in the way of their love for each other
 - They didn't let anything get in the way of their love for God and for each other
 - The HS enabled them to walk in the power of the risen Christ in laying aside preferences and they lived out Jesus' command to love God and love each other
- B/c they loved God and loved each other, their actions of love for each other were evident to the world around them
 - And, they were able to give testimony with their words...they were able to share that it's by the power of the risen Jesus that they're able to live in sweet fellowship and communion with each other
 - Their unity was a great testimony to the world around them
- The same's true for us nearly 2000 yrs later
 - **The HS unites us in the Gospel so that our love for each other reflects the power of JC**
 - People will see that we're different when we're living in unity in our love and care for each other
 - As Jesus said to John 13:35 – "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another"
- "We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
 We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord
 And we pray that all unity may one day be restored
 And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
 We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand
 We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand
 And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land
 And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love"
- May our love and actions and attitudes point to Christ, amen!?
- May our love for each other flow out into sacrificial care for each other so that the people in Port Alberni and beyond see Jesus!
 - When we love each other in this way people will notice there's something different about us
 - When we give of ourselves and people see a unified group of people taking care of each other all the time, they'll ask questions
 - We've seen this play out as we've helped each other move to new homes in the past...neighbors ask and we have the opportunity to tell people that our risen Savior's the reason we love each other and care for each other
 - May people know we're Christians by our love for each other

- We see this here in our text in Acts 4 today

4) PEOPLE MATTER MORE THAN PROPERTY (vv34-35)

- We see in vv34-35 that people mattered more than property
- The believers in the early church were willing to sell their property and their possessions in order to care for the needs of those in the church
 - There were willing to sell their property and possessions so that those in need would be well taken care of
 - And, v34 shows us that there wasn't a needy person among them b/c of the desire of the believers to help each other out
 - People were more important to them than their homes
 - People were more important to them than their land
 - People were more important to them than their bank accounts
 - People were more important to them than their retirement fund
- What's important here's not who the possessions belonged to
 - But, rather people's attitude about their possessions
 - First, they voluntarily gave of their possession
 - Second, private ownership continued one
 - This isn't saying that it's evil or sinful to have a home or to have land or to have a car
 - The point's that they didn't care to hang on to their stuff or to their money when they could be loving on each other instead
 - The early church shows us here that they loved people more than they loved money...and they did so when there was a need
 - So, the point's here's that nothing should ever get in the way of our love for God...but, also our love for each other
 - And, sadly money can get in the way
 - The love of money's always been an obstacle to spiritual growth
 - 1 Tim 6:10 – "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs."
 - That's scary, isn't it?
 - That craving money causes some to wander from the faith...to leave their walk with God...to find their security in something other than the saving work of JC
- But, not for this group in our text today...next week's a different story as we look the story of Ananias and Sapphira
- But, our group today's selling their homes and property and bringing the money to the apostles to distribute
 - They came bringing their money to the church trusting the apostles, who God appointed, to know who to give the money to in order to care for them
- When we're filled w/ the HS, and when we've trusted in Jesus for our salvation, we'll have the same heart
 - We'll have the same heart that loves each other and wants to care for each other more than we want to take care of ourselves
 - This takes HS power, doesn't it?
 - But, thankfully, he helps us in this
 - He helps us to be selfless
 - He helps us to be generous

- He helps us to be benevolent
- He helps us to be loving
- He helps us, amen?

5) THE EXAMPLE OF BARNABAS (vv36-37)

- And, the last two verses of our text give us the name of someone who lived this way
- We see that Joseph, or Barnabas, was one who loved in this way
- We're shown Barnabas' character in our text...that he was an encourager...or "one who exhorts" as the GRK brings out
- Barnabas was one of the earliest missionaries
- Acts 11:24 says that "he was a good man, full of the HS and of faith."
- He'll appear later on in Acts a few more times...as he's a major figure in the early church
- But, he's mentioned here for the purpose of showing us the heart and love he has for the body of believers by selling his land and giving the money to the apostles to pass it along to those in the church who're in need
 - And, his heart and actions are shown in contrast to Ananias and Sapphira who we'll see next week
- Barnabas sacrificially gave of his possessions and his money in order to care for his brothers and sisters in need

6) CONCLUSION

- May we do the same, amen?
- In our church – may we sacrificially give of ourselves and our money and our possessions so that we can care for each other and love each other
- In our families – husbands with your wives, wives with your husbands, parents with your children, grandparents with your grandchildren
- As believers, let's live by the power of the HS in such unity with each other so that we can love each other in a way that points a dying world to our resurrected Savior
- Let's stand united in worshiping our God who saves us and redeems us
- Let's, in unity, cry out to God in prayer together for help in love him and loving each other as Jesus commanded us
- Let's be committed, together, to the truth of God's Word...to hear it and know it and obey it together
- Let's be committed to the mission Jesus gave us in Acts 1:8 when he said, that "you will receive power when the HS has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."
- May our love and care for each other testify of our unity in Christ
 - And, may we powerfully live out God's gospel of sovereign grace
 - In his total and absolute power and authority over all things, he's given us grace...he's given us what we don't deserve...life
 - Life in Jesus
 - Let's live to make this Jesus known
 - To each other and to the world
 - **May the HS unite us in the Gospel so that our love for each other reflects the power of JC**