

When God is at Work in His Church

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[0 : 0 0] Morning, church. Our scripture this morning comes from Acts chapter 4, 32 to chapter 5, verse 11. Please follow along in your bulletins, your Bibles, or the screen behind me.

Starting in verse 32, we read, Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

And with great power, the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas, which means son of encouragement, a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

[1 : 1 0] But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge, he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet.

But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?

While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart?

You have not lied to man, but to God. When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last.

And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him. After an interval of about three hours, his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

[2 : 1 8] And Peter said to her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much. And she said, Yes, for so much. But Peter said to her, How is it that you have agreed together to test the spirit of the Lord?

Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out. Immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last.

When the young men came in, they found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things. This is the word of God. Okay, great. Thank you, Jaya. Good morning, everybody. It's great to be with you again. If you are new to Watermark, my name is Kevin, and it's great to have you with us this morning.

I want to start off by asking a question. What is very precious to you? What is very precious to you?

[3 : 2 7] What do you love to take care of? When I was a young schoolboy, the thing that was most important to me in life was the game of cricket. I don't know if you know the game of cricket.

Cricket is a sport that, I guess, various countries play. And talking about cricket, if you are Australian, I'm sorry that you lost the cricket to South Africa at 10 o'clock last night.

But there's a prayer team that will pray for your healing after the service. But I loved the game of cricket. I loved following cricket.

I loved watching cricket. I loved practicing cricket. I loved reading all the statistics of my favorite players and reading their biographies. But more than anything, I loved playing cricket.

And one of the things I loved to do was to make sure all my cricket equipment was well-packed. Everything had its place. Everything was neatly polished and cleaned and in its place.

[4 : 26] I loved taking care of my things. And so one of the things I loved to do as a boy was before cricket season each year, I would cycle on my bicycle two kilometers down the road to the nearest hardware store.

And I had to buy two things, some rolls of sandpaper and some special oil that you use to clean a cricket bat. Then I would cycle home and I would spend the next few days sanding down my cricket bat.

Sanding all the bumps and the color and the red marks from the cricket ball out from the previous season. And all the chips and the dents. And I would get it as smooth as possible.

And then I would paint it with linseed oil and leave it to dry for a couple of days. And then a few days later I'd go through the whole process again. Until that cricket bat was as smooth as whatever you can imagine.

A baby's bottom, let's just say. And it smelled like fresh oil. I loved taking care of my cricket bat. Why? Because at that age, that was probably my most precious possession.

[5 : 35] We love to take care of things that are precious to us. Now I wonder what is precious to you? What do you love taking care of? Maybe you've just got a new car, right?

And suddenly there are all sorts of new rules around the home. No eating in the car. And you are fastidious about making sure it's clean, not only on the outside, but on the inside.

Maybe you've been saving up for a new guitar. And you've just bought that Taylor guitar that you've been saving up for for months or years. And what do you do? You buy a cover. You buy dehumidifiers.

You buy all sorts of other things. And you're retuning it way too often. You're polishing it. You've got a special cloth just to clean your guitar.

And warning to anybody that touches your dear guitar. Or maybe somebody passes you a family heirloom. A diamond ring.

[6 : 31] And you go out and you buy a special safe and a special box. And special cleaning material. And you make sure nobody is allowed to touch your family heirloom. Friends, what is precious to you?

What do you love taking care of? What would your family and friends say that is precious to you based on what you spend time and effort and energy looking after?

What do you love to take care of? Well, we're working through the book of Acts. And in the book of Acts, we see how the gospel goes out and forms this community of people.

This gospel-shaped community, which is called the church. And the church is a gathering of followers of Jesus, those that have encountered His grace, and now come together.

And in this passage, we see that the church, the community of believers, is very precious to Jesus. Jesus loves to take care and to work on and to look after His church.

[7 : 34] And we're going to see in our passage today that He does that in two ways. He does it through the work of cultivating generous love and through the work of confronting counterfeit faith.

To Jesus Christ, the church is so precious to Him that He doesn't just leave it to its own devices. He works on it. He works in it. He takes great care of it.

And He wants it to be the beautiful church that He's designed it to be. So, let's dive in and look at this passage. If you've got a Bible, look at it with me, or you've got a bulletin, follow along.

We're going to be looking at this passage together. Let's look at the first section. Jesus works in His church by cultivating generous love. And we're going to look at verses 32 to 37 here.

Now, this passage is very similar to one that we looked at just a few weeks ago, at the end of chapter 2. And in that passage, you'll remember Peter preaches on the day of Pentecost.

[8 : 34] About 3,000 people come to faith. And then there's this amazing passage that Luke describes the believers come together that are very devoted to the things of God.

There's kind of a vertical component. There's that famous verse in chapter 2 that says, They were devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to breaking of bread, and to the prayers.

And they're also devoted to each other. But there's quite a vertical component. Well, in this passage that Jaya read to us, we see something very similar. But here Luke's emphasis is on the horizontal component.

As the gospel goes out, as people are changed, what happens? It forms a community. A community of people that, yes, they love God, but they also love one another.

Yes, they want to serve God, but they also are serving one another. Here is a group of people who are coming together, not just for what they can get or take or receive, but how they can love and serve each other.

[9 : 37] Look at what it says. Verse 32. It says, Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. And no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own.

But they shared and had everything in common. You may remember there's a verse in Matthew's gospel, chapter 10, where Jesus sends his disciples out, and he says, Freely you have received, now freely give.

And that's what we see here. Here are a group of people that, having received so much from Christ, so much in the gospel, received mercy and grace and love and redemption, having freely received, are now willing to freely give.

And so, look at verse 34. It says, God is at work in this community.

God doesn't just gather them and say, Okay, get on to yourself. He's at work. He's fashioning them. He's shaping them. You know, one of the things that's amazing about the book of Acts is the many miracles.

[10 : 56] Luke calls them signs and wonders. We saw that two weeks ago when Alan was preaching. Peter and John are on the way to the temple. There's a beggar. He can't walk.

And they, in the name of Jesus, get up and walk. And he's made well. The book of Acts is full of these amazing miracles. And what is a miracle? A miracle is when God intervenes and transcends the ordinary laws of nature.

A blind man gets sight. A cripple is able to walk. It's God intervening over and above the regular laws of nature. Friends, here what Luke wants to show us is that the miraculous nature of the church was not just the blind getting sight, the cripple walking, but actually the hearts of those that have been touched by the gospel.

Look at the miracles here. Not a needy person amongst them. People selling houses and lands and giving money as distributed to anyone as they had need.

And just so we know that these are real stories involving real people, Luke tells us about one man in particular. He says, verse 36, Thus Joseph, who is also called Barnabas, a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold the field that belonged to him, brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

[12 : 14] This wasn't just general kind of kindness. This was particularly real people selling their possessions and sharing with anyone as they had need. Now, how does this come about?

One of the things Luke wants to tell us is that this is God's doing. Look at verse 33 with me. Luke says, And with great power, the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

You know, some commentators think verse 33 doesn't really fit in, because verse 32 talks about this radical generosity. Verse 34 onwards talks about radical generosity.

And verse 33 is kind of, it doesn't really fit. But actually what Luke is wanting to say here is, where does this generosity come from? This wasn't a political manifesto.

This wasn't a social experiment. This wasn't an economic model. How can we redistribute wealth? This is a work of great power and great grace.

[13 : 20] When the Holy Spirit comes upon His people, He changes them from the inside, so that they cannot help but love and serve those around them. This is God getting a hold of His people, so that God's community starts to look like what?

Like God Himself. Who is God? God is the one who, though He was rich, became poor for our sakes, so that we might become rich in Him.

He is the one who so loved the world, that He gave His Son, so that we might not perish. God, out of the abundance of His riches, gives and gives and gives, grace upon grace, mercy upon mercy, love upon love.

And in the Gospels, we see this in individual ways. We see people like Zacchaeus, right?

Remember Zacchaeus? He's a bit of a thief. He's a tax collector. He's sided with the Romans against his own people.

But he encounters the mercy of God, and what does he say? Lord, after half of my possessions, I will give away. And if I've cheated anybody, four times what I've taken from them, I will repay them.

[14 : 29] Or think of Mary. She encounters this, the amazing mercy of Jesus. And what does she do? She takes her precious bottle of perfume, worth a year's wages, breaks it and pours out of Jesus.

In the Gospels, we see these individual accounts of the mercy of God, changing people to radical generosity. But here it is, we see not just individuals, but an entire community that has formed around the Gospel.

I read a story recently of a lady called Elisha. And she tells the story where she says, I got dressed to get fired one day.

Why was she dressed to get fired? Well, she had recently joined this company. Okay, don't worry about the slide. She had joined this company six months before. She had been 15 months without work, doing temp work, and just trying to make ends meet.

Finally landed a job, but six months into the job, the company was going through layoffs, and was laying off numerous staff. And so she says, I got dressed to get fired that day.

[15 : 37] And that day when I was at work, as the office descended into chaos of tears and people packing up their boxes, I waited at my desk for HR to call me for my notification letter.

But it never came. She says, the most beloved and hardworking member of her team was let go, but she was spared. Everybody in her team was stunned.

Why was she spared? This is to what she writes. As I walked home that day, relief and gratitude overcame me. As I passed my neighborhood grocery store, a woman sat outside asking for money, and I couldn't help but give to her.

Never have I given as radically and as generously to any stranger as I did that day. Why? I was under the influence of mercy.

What a great line. She says, I couldn't help but I've never given so radically, so generously to a stranger. Why? I was under the influence of mercy.

[16 : 42] Friends, that's what we see in Acts here. A community that is formed around the gospel, that's under the influence of mercy, that cannot help but be radically generous because of what they've received.

And over the last few weeks as we've been reading Acts, we've seen how God is at work through the church. Right? The apostles are standing up. They're preaching.

Hundreds of people getting saved. God is at work through his church. But what Luke wants us to see here is God was not only at work through the church, but in the church.

It wasn't only outsiders, those out there that needed the grace and the gospel. God was cultivating a culture of grace and generosity in the church until it started to look like him.

Now, what does this mean for us? Well, here's one simple implication I can think of. What is the grace and generosity barometer of your heart looking like?

[17 : 43] Okay, do you know what a barometer is? A barometer is an instrument that measures the pressure in the atmosphere and tells you what the weather is going to be like. Okay, this is before the days of iPhones.

Okay? So long, long ago, when I was a kid and we didn't have smartphones, we used things called barometers. Okay? And I'm just joking. I didn't have a barometer growing up.

But it measures the atmospheric pressure which is something you can't see and then it tells you what's going to happen with the weather. Now, generosity and grace is like a barometer that tells us what is the atmospheric pressure of our hearts.

How deeply has the gospel got a hold of us and gripped our hearts? Here we see a community that is transformed by the gospel and what does it do?

It makes them radically generous and gracious to one another. It makes them giving. It makes them no longer consumers but servers. Friends, if God's generosity and grace to us as individuals produces a community of grace and generosity to one another, one way to measure that is to ask ourselves how gracious, how generous are we to those around us?

[18 : 59] How gracious are we to those in our families? How sacrificial are we with our possessions? How inclusive are we to those that are different from us and maybe even challenge us?

How generous are we to those who we feel don't deserve it? Because the gospel that brings us into oneness with God himself will also bring us into one heart and one spirit with those around us.

So friends, are we living under the influence of mercy? What is the barometer of grace saying about our lives? Jesus is at work in his church cultivating generous love.

But here we see in chapter 5 another story and it's the picture of Jesus at work in his church confronting counterfeit faith. Now, if you're new to church this morning, maybe you've never read Acts chapter 5 and it's quite a scary story, right?

It looks like God takes out one of his own. You may be surprised to find that it's in the Bible. Here we have a wealthy couple and nice and Sapphira and they sell a piece of land, an excess piece of land and they bring a portion of the proceeds to the apostles and they lay it at their feet and say, here, take this money and distribute it to the poor as you see fit.

[20 : 19] And what do they get in return for their generosity? An early funeral service, right? They both fall down dead. What on earth is going on here?

I was going to comment about our building fund. Thankfully, that didn't happen here. We are all still alive and well as far as I know. But let's look at what's happening here.

And nice comes to the apostles and he hands over this pile of money. Look at what Peter says, verse 3. And nice, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land?

Just by the way, throughout the book of Acts, God is constantly telling us that these people are filled with the Spirit. Filled with the Spirit. Filled with the Spirit. Which is what we want to be, right?

Filled with the Spirit. Here, Peter tells Ananias he's filled with Satan. Not the kind of church we want to be. Verse 4. While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own?

[21 : 24] And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you've contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man, but to God. When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last and the young men came and carried him out and buried him.

And of course, his wife Sapphira, three hours later, comes in and the same thing happens. Now, what's going on here? Well, this account tells us at least two things about the early church and the Christian faith.

The first thing it tells us is this, that gospel generosity and sacrificial love were so important, so highly valued to the early church that some people were willing to fake it in order to be part of the community.

And that's quite remarkable. This value of generous love and gracious, sacrificial giving was so highly valued that some people thought, I can't do it, but I better fake it in order to be part of this community.

And then why, the reason why, as we've been saying, is because sacrificial generosity and undeserved grace are at the very heart of the Christian faith that they believed and proclaimed.

[22 : 37] Friends, if you're new to church this morning, if you're new to the Christian faith, at the heart of Christianity is the historical reality that Jesus Christ gave of his life on the cross, died for your sins and my sins.

He gave up his life that we can be included in the family and the people of God. And Jesus gave of himself so that the moral debt that you and I hold can be paid and full and done away with.

Jesus looked at our moral debt and said, I will pay your debt on your behalf. And so, this value was so highly esteemed that some were even willing to fake it to be part of the community.

But here's the second thing that tells us. That genuine faith and authentic worship were so highly valued by God that he was even willing to expose and remove those who compromised or endangered the Christian faith and the gospel.

And that's really scary. That genuine, authentic worship and faith was so highly valued by God that he's even willing to expose and maybe even remove those who endanger and compromise the gospel.

[23 : 54] You see, why does God deal with Ananias and Sapphira like this? Well, it's not because of their love for money. It's not necessarily their greed. It's their duplicity, their inauthenticity.

Look at what Peter says here in verse 4. He says, While it remained unsold and nice, did your property not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?

Why have you contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man, but to God. See, God entrusted them with money and they could have sold their property and said, come to the leaders and said, you know what guys, we don't, actually God's been gracious to us.

We don't need all of this money. He has 50%. Or, He has 30%. He has 10%, right? They could have done that and that would have been a remarkable story of grace and generosity. But actually, what's happening here is here are people that are not resting in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, not resting in the love of the Father, not trusting in the free grace of Christ.

[25 : 01] Their identity, their security is, is, is in, not found in what Jesus has done in the cross for them and His substitution in death on the cross.

Actually, where is their identity found? Where is their security found? On what basis are they wanting to be part of the Christian community? It's the appearance of righteousness. It's the appearance of being moral and having it all together. It's in a counterfeit facade of morality, believing that their behavior, their generosity, will allow them to be part of the community of faith. But friends, friends, the only thing that welcomes us into the community of faith is the free gift of God's grace, not our righteousness or our generosity or kindness or any moral appearance. It's in the fact that we come to an empty hand and say, nothing in my hands I bring, simply to your grace and your mercy do I cling. Dane Ortlund in his excellent book called Deeper writes this.

[26 : 09] He says, there are two ways to be dishonest with fellow Christians. Explicit dishonesty and implicit dishonesty. Explicit dishonesty is outright lying, right?

Saying, I went here when you didn't or I gave this away when you didn't. But it is also implicit dishonesty which is much more subtle and much more common.

This is the self-projection that gives an appearance of moral success and righteousness when the truth is far different. Here in Ananias and Sapphira we see both of those, don't we?

Yes, there's explicit lying. This is how much we sold the property for. But far more sinister, far more dangerous is the implicit lying, the projection of righteousness, the projection of immorality, the projection of having it all together when the truth is far from it.

See friends, it's not just that Ananias sinned or did something wrong that got them in trouble. We all sin. We all make mistakes. If sin was the thing that disqualified them, there would be no such thing as a church.

[27 : 21] But it's pretending to trust in Christ. It's pretending, attempting to earn God's favor through financial gifts. That's an affront to God and an offense to the gospel.

Friends, long before Ananias and Sapphira lied to the community and even before they lied to God, they were lying to themselves, thinking that something other than the mercy of Jesus could bring them into God's family.

Telling themselves that no one needed to know about their discrepancy, their disconnect between the story they were projecting and the reality of their lives. A few weeks ago, Jesse, somewhere around, put me on to an author called Blaise Pascal.

Blaise Pascal was a mathematician and a philosopher about 400 years ago. He was a wonderful Christian man and he wrote some amazing things and since Jesse and I had lunch, I've been reading Blaise Pascal's book called Thoughts or Pensies.

And there's an amazing paragraph that he writes in there and I want to read some of it to us. This is what he says. Blaise Pascal is wondering about the conflict in the human heart about the fact that we love ourselves.

[28 : 41] And he says this, he says, the nature of humanity is self-love and the nature of human ego is to love the self only. And he says, but what will we do?

There's a problem because we must realize we love ourselves but if we're honest with ourselves, we all see our own faults and failings. and so we love this imperfect image that we have of ourselves.

And he says that as humans we want to be great but we know the reality is we're small. We want to be perfect but we see ourselves as full of imperfections.

We want to be an object of love and esteem and honor in the eyes of others but we see that our faults merit only scorn and contempt. And then he writes this, he says, this disconnect which we find in ourselves produces the most unrighteous and criminal obsession that can be imagined.

For man conceives an enemy against that truth which confronts him and convinces him of his faults. He says, we dream up in our minds there's this enmity between how we see ourselves and what we want to be and who we really are.

[29 : 54] He would annihilate that truth but unable to destroy it entirely he destroys it as far as possible in his own mind and that of others.

That is to say he devotes all his attention to hiding his faults both from others and from himself. See what he's saying? He's saying, we have this image of ourselves.

I want to look good. I want to think of myself as grace but when I look at myself I see these faults inside of myself. So what do I do? I can't deny the truth or I can't hide the truth so I'll deny it.

I'll deny it in your eyes by projecting an image that I'm better than I am and I'll deny it to myself by telling myself I'm not as bad as I really am. And then Blaise Pascal goes on and he says, truly it is evil to be full of faults but it is still greater evil to be full of faults and unwilling to recognize them since that is to add to the further fault voluntary deception.

Friends, none of us are perfect. All of us have faults. If you don't have any faults I'd love to meet you. Friends, the basis of the Christian faith is that you can only come if you know yourself a sinner.

[31 : 13] If you admit yourself a sinner. If you come to the foot of the cross and say, Jesus, I don't have it together. I need your grace. But there is a tendency inside of our hearts to deny that to others and to deny that to ourselves and ultimately to deny it to God and say, God, I have it all together.

Look at me. I don't need your grace. I've got it all myself. And that is a disastrous, disastrous thing to do because it excludes us from the grace of God.

And so look at how, in this passage, look at how Luke structures this passage. In Acts chapter 4, Luke, we looked at this last week, the Christians face remarkable persecution and obstruction.

They are, the apostles are arrested, they're thrown in jail, they are threatened. In Acts chapter 5, we see the same thing. The apostles are arrested, they're thrown in jail, they are threatened, they're even beaten up.

But in between these two passages of Acts chapter 4 and Acts chapter 5, here we find the story of Ananias and Sapphira. And I think Luke is wanting to tell us something. Luke says that there are two great dangers that the Christian church will face.

[32 : 30] There is opposition and persecution from outside, but there's a far more insidious, a far more dangerous kind of enemy. It's not the opposition and the persecution from outside, it's the insidious deception, dishonesty that resides within.

And we, the church can withstand opposition from outside, but the deception and the dishonesty that resides within our hearts will kill us and destroy us and eat us up from the inside.

Persecution, suffering, torture, jail, prison, friends, these things can't destroy the church. But the sin that resides within is far more dangerous.

And so what would it look like for us to be a community of sincerity and truth? Well, it looks like, sorry, what would it look like for us to be like Ananias and Sapphira?

How does this look in our own lives? Well, here's a couple of ideas. Maybe it looks like pretending that we have a genuine relationship with God when in reality our hearts are called to Him and called to the things of God.

[33 : 38] Friends, maybe it looks like cultivating secret habits or addictions, patterns of sinful behavior which are well-guarded secrets and we make sure that nobody, nobody's going to find out about this.

Friends, maybe it's living a double life. We are one person at work, one person at home, one person at university, one person with our friends out and then a completely different person at church on Sunday or a small group on Wednesday.

Friends, maybe it's pretending to forgive somebody and we put on a smile and we talk sweetly to them. We say, that's fine, don't worry, it's all over. But we replay the action and we harbor bitterness and anger and hatred in our hearts.

You know, the 16th century reformers had a phrase, a Latin phrase they used to say. They used to say, *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*.

Okay, I hope you appreciate my Latin, which means the church reformed, always reforming. In other words, in the 16th century, the church discovered the gospel and it completely reformed the church.

[34 : 50] It renewed the church. They discovered the wonder of Jesus and the good news of grace and God's mercy and the fact that Jesus died on the cross for sinners like them. And this reformation caused the revival of the whole of Europe and changed the world.

The church was radically, radically different because of rediscovering the gospel of God's grace. The church reformed. They called themselves the reformed church.

But they were very, very aware that the danger would be to say, God, we've arrived. We've discovered the gospel. What can possibly go wrong? And then just to coast into deception and duplicity.

And so they had this phrase, yes, the church is reformed, but the church is always reforming, always repenting, always examining our hearts and asking ourselves, where is duplicity lying within?

Search me, O God, and know my heart, says Psalm 139. Try me and know my thoughts and see if there's any grievous way in me and lead me in the way of everlasting life.

[35 : 58] Friends, is it possible that there is a measure of Ananias and Sapphira in us, lurking in our hearts? For those of us that have been Christians for many years or part of the church community for many years, the danger is even more prevalent because it's very easy to say the right things and to act the part and to put on the right lingo and to put on the Christian smile and to act like everything's together all the while there's something dark and sinister going on inside.

Blaise Pascal, at the end of that paragraph, he writes another paragraph and this is what he says. He says, there is one man who we are commanded to undeceive, in other words, to be transparent before, to come before him honestly and sincerely and to be real.

And the amazing thing is that he knows everything about us everywhere and he loves us more than we can ever imagine. You see, friends, the secret to being honest with others is to firstly be honest with God.

There is one man who we are commanded to undeceive, to come before him transparently and honestly. But friends, the good news is that this one man knows you perfectly anyway and he loves you perfectly anyway.

And he went to the cross for you to cover your sin and your shame. And as you come honestly before him, you can be honest with yourself. And as you are honest with yourself, we can be honest with one another.

[37 : 35] As we said earlier, the book of Acts there are these two stories showing us God is at work in his church. Jesus so loves his church, it's so precious to him that he's committed to working on it.

How so? By cultivating generous love and sacrificial grace and by confronting duplicity and counterfeit faith.

how should we respond? Let me give us one or two thoughts. Firstly, friends, be encouraged. Jesus loves his church and he's committed to purifying and strengthening and edifying her.

And as imperfect and as messy as she can be, Jesus has given us his spirit. He's at work in her. Jesus loves the church and he's committed to working in her and purifying her and making him the spotless bride that she one day will be.

Friends, Jesus loves you and you are precious to him. And because you are precious to him, he is committed to working on you and purifying you and cultivating a heart of generosity and honesty and transparency in your life as well.

[38 : 44] So be encouraged. Jesus loves you and is for you and is working on you. But secondly, be careful. There may be more Ananias and Sapphira in us than we like to admit.

And so let's humbly examine ourselves. Let's transparently allow God to be at work in us. Let's ask God to cut and prune away the parts of our lives that are not of him and ask him to help us to lead us to walk in his ways.

And then finally, friends, let's be honest. Honest with ourselves. Honest with God and honest with one another. Dane Ortlund in his book, Deep, I read a passage earlier, he ends that chapter called Honesty Like This.

He says, friends, believe the gospel. Find a trustworthy friend and bring that brother or sister into your fallenness in a transparent but also a healing and redemptive way.

Humble yourself down to the death of honesty and see what life blossoms up on the other side. Find yourself bathed afresh in the gospel of God's grace and the wonder of his love.

[39 : 56] And as you dare to go deeper into honesty and deeper into the experience of the cleansing, washing blood of Jesus, watch your heart relax and your spirit grow into the growth and mercy you long for but didn't know how to find.

Friends, Dane Ortlund is really right. There is a way to be healed and it starts with diving deep into the mercy, the honest mercy of Jesus and coming up alive on the other side, more free and more relaxed than we ever thought possible.

Why don't I pray for us and then let's close there together. Let's pray together. Father God, as Celeste remind us this Father's Day we come before you, the perfect Father, the perfect, perfect Father, the Father who doesn't point your finger and show us all our faults and leave us to our own devices, the Father who so loved us that you sent your only Son, that we should not perish but have eternal life.

Jesus, thank you that you love your church so much that you committed to working on her. The church and we are so precious to you that you will not leave us in our own devices but you call us to yourself.

God, by your Spirit come and work on us. Drive out the duplicity and call us to honesty and sincerity I pray. In your wonderful gracious name, Amen.