

“The property was yours to sell or not sell, as you wished. And after selling it, the money was also yours to give away. How could you do a thing like this? You weren’t lying to us but to God!” Acts 5:4 NLT

lectio // Acts 5:1-11

This has got to be the wildest story about community accountability in the New Testament! Why did this husband and wife do this? It’s impossible to know for sure. Selling things and giving the proceeds to the church community for “common good” was a real thing then. And, it became popular to do so. Hopefully individuals and couples saw the needs and genuinely wanted to be generous and trust God for their own needs. This does tell us that people were prioritizing the church’s needs (people who needed food, clothing or a place to live) above their own. This may seem radical today, but the community of faith may have already been living like this to some extent. But why hold some back and lie? Was it to appear to be MORE generous than they really were? Were they putting some money away in case this Jesus thing didn’t work? We just don’t know. What we know is that the Holy Spirit wanted to bring the issue to the light but only gave the wife a chance to just be honest. Peter used an interesting phrase, “why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the Holy Spirit, and you kept some of the money for yourself.” This plan was hatched in hell and Ananias took the bait. This “hidden” sin allowed Satan to do his work inside the church. And Peter made it known, a sin like this, against the believers who are a community of faith, is against the Holy Spirit and will not be tolerated. I wonder how many times people have thought nothing of destructive gossip or lies or power-grabs in the church without realizing that Satan has filled their heart and their sin is against God. I’m pretty sure this one incident shut down squabbles and pretentious pettiness for a little while.

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Dad,

This is such a powerful “prophet” kind of story, similar to Elisha calling out a bear to eat the young men who called him baldy. I’m sure this was much more serious though. This story should be told in our discussions about church discipline and the seriousness of bringing the enemy into our midst and allowing that spirit to wreck havoc on the intimate trust and work among believers when our mission is so critical. If the work of salvation and redemption weren’t so eternally important, it wouldn’t be a big deal. However, the work of the gospel in and through the church is a big deal. New or wounded believers are sensitive to leaders who just let these kinds of issues slide.

contemplatio

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root