

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 19 June 2022
Services: *Across the Diocese*
Series: New beginnings
Title: Persecution mounts
Passage: Acts 5:17-42
Outline: **The elders - driven by**

- **Jealousy**
- **Fear**
- **Guilt**
- **Anger**

The apostles – driven by

- **New life**
- **Obedience**
- **Who Jesus is**
- **Joy**
- **Telling people who Jesus is**

Let's do a quick recap of where we've come from so far in this series...

Jesus **ascended** and the Holy Spirit **descended** with the most marvellous signs of **wind** and **fire** and people speaking of God in **foreign languages** so that those who gathered in Jerusalem for the historic feast of Pentecost would take the news of God and Jesus back to their towns!

There was some grief and shock when some listening to Peter's first sermon realised that they'd **killed the Messiah** – but Peter assures those concerned that with **repentance** comes **forgiveness**...

We saw that the early church was devoted to the Apostle's **teaching**, to **the fellowship**, to the **breaking of bread** and to **prayer** – and we're asking **you** right now through our survey – is **your** church devoted to these things??

We saw Peter and John – through the power of Jesus - heal a beggar who couldn't walk – and that landed them in **jail** and they were told not to **speak** in the name of **Jesus** any **further**

And we saw **another description** of the early church where the **generosity** of God's people meant that **no one was in need**...

Last week we saw that **Ananias** and **Sapphira** tried to make **OUT** that they were more generous than they really **were**... and we also saw God's **remarkable power** for **healing** through the Apostles.

Now **today** to the **second** half of **Acts 5**... and I want you to see today the extreme **contrast** between what drove the **Jewish religious elders**, compared to what **drove** the **apostles**

For the elders it seems to me were driven by **jealousy, fear, guilt and anger**

The apostles were driven by new **life, obedience, by who Jesus is, by joy and by telling people who Jesus is.**

First:

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**1. THE ELDERS WERE DRIVEN BY
A. JEALOUSY**

V17 – have a look with me – this is immediately following the crowds gathering from the towns around Jerusalem – those who were sick or who were tormented by demons – and **all** of them were **healed**

And instead of the elders standing back and thinking – well – isn't this **amazing** and **wonderful** – all these sick people made **whole** again...

Their thinking is entirely **elsewhere** – v17 – *then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with **jealousy**. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.*

The **apostles** back in **jail!**

Why? Because the **elders** were **jealous** of all the **attention** they were getting.

Sound **familiar?**

Pilate at **Jesus' trial** – knew it was out of **envy** that the religious leaders had handed **Jesus over!**

People being **healed** – and the elders - **jealous** at all the attention the apostles were **getting** – **tragic!**

Second, the elders were driven by

B. FEAR

So the apostles were **arrested** because of the elders' jealousy

An **angel** of the Lord let them **out!**

It's almost **comical** because the next morning when the **elders** send for the **apostles**, they find the jail **locked**, the guards still standing at the **doors** // but no one **inside**.

And you get a sense of their **fear** in 24 – *on hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.*

Fear

Where is all this **going?**

A locked guarded jail with **no one inside!!**

And then of course in the next **paragraph** – do you see? – v25 – *the men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people!*

The **reaction? Fear**. Again.

They **re-arrested** the apostles, but we read they did not use force, because they **feared** that the people would stone them.

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C. GUILT

On arrest the elders say to the apostles – hey – we told you not to teach about Jesus... v28b – *Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.*

They **feel** the **guilt**... and they realise what Peter has been saying from the outset...

Back in 2:33 – you **killed Jesus**...

3:13 – you **handed Jesus over**...

4:10 – **Jesus** – whom **you crucified**

Yes – the apostles **were** determined to point out the **guilt** of the religious leaders in Jesus' **death**

And so **again** – right **here** – Peter says – we can't keep **quiet** about Jesus... v30 *you killed him by hanging on a cross...*

And of course, what is the answer to the **guilt** that Peter consistently **points out**?

He's had the same message every **time**

You **killed** him – God **raised** him

2:38 – **repent** and be **baptised**, every one of you... for the **forgiveness** of your **sins**

3:19 **Repent** and turn to **God**, so that your **sins** may be **wiped out**

4:12 salvation is found in **no one else**... but **Jesus**

And here in chapter 5

You **killed** him – God **exalted** him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might bring Israel to **repentance** and **forgive** their **sins**...

Friends the **answer** to guilt is **repentance**

And the **response** to **repentance** is **forgiveness**

Will you just let that **sink in**?

Yes, they had **killed Jesus**

Yes, they **should** feel guilt – because they were **guilty**

But every time Peter confronts them this way – he also points to the **glorious solution**... **repentance**... **forgiveness**

Perhaps **some** here today, have that same sense of **guilt**

I remember as a 10 year old, being confronted many a time with the fact that I had not been treating **God** as **God**

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The guilt I felt was **appropriate** because I was in fact **guilty** – of shutting God **out** – of living my **own way**

I was getting tired of **feeling** such **guilt**

It was a **burden**. **My stomach churned**.

And the **answer**?

Glorious – wonderful relief came – when I **repented!**

My **repentance** was met with **forgiveness**

And **forgiveness** was **sweet** and **wonderful** and **glorious**

If you feel **guilt** before **God** today – come – **repent** – admit your **guilt** – your **sin** – your **rebellion** – say “**I’m sorry**” – and **revel** in the sweet **relief** of the **forgiveness** which comes through Jesus’ **death and resurrection!**

Fourth – the elders were driven by:

D. ANGER

When Peter once again explained their guilt – AND pointed out how that might be relieved... have a look with me in v33 at the response of the elders: *when they heard this, they were **furious** and wanted to put them to **death***

How **annoying** is Jesus to some **people!!**

Jealousy – fear – guilt – anger – it’s all **here...**

And all seen in **many** people **TODAY** as **well...**

Now I love the account here of a wise Pharisee named **Gamaliel** – who basically told the elders to **calm down** – and to realise that if this movement of the Christians was of **human** origin, it will **die off and fall away** - but if on the other hand it was from **God** – then **NOTHING** they could do would **stop** it!

Wise **words //**

And here we are 2,000 years later – still going... still **sharing** Jesus... so that **others** may have life

It hasn’t died out... because it **WAS INDEED FROM GOD!**

And with **Gamaliel’s** words, they still **flogged** the apostles – but let them **go** – v40

Jealousy – fear – guilt – anger – how **tragic** is the elders’ ongoing **opposition** to Jesus... !

And what a **contrast** to the **apostles**

2. THE APOSTLES WERE DRIVEN BY

A. NEW LIFE

New life... did you notice the lovely phrase on the lips of the angel of the Lord who opened the doors of the jail?

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V20 – *Go, stand in the temple courts* – that’s really provocative isn’t it – I love that - *Go, stand in the temple courts and tell the people **all about this new life!***

The new life found in **relationship** with **Jesus...** who **died** but was now **resurrected** and who had sent his **Holy Spirit** into all **believers....**

The apostles **knew** this **new life themselves**

...and now **lived** to tell **others** all about this **new life...**

Oh **friends** – is that **you??** – is that **me??** – are we **driven** by a **desire** to tell others about this **glorious, wonderful, beautiful new life found in Jesus? //**

Second, the disciples were driven by

B. OBEDIENCE

So remember – they got out of prison – went to the temple to teach – were **rearrested** – brought in – made to appear before the **Sanhedrin** to be questioned by the **high priest** – who said in v28 – *we gave you strict orders not to teach in this name (the name of Jesus) – yet you have filled Jerusalem with your **teaching...***

Their response> v29 – *we must obey **God** rather than human beings...*

They were driven by **obedience** to God – which when what God wants, clashes with the orders of the **authorities** – obedience to God, must take precedence over obedience to **them! //**

And so driven by that **obedience** – they will continue to tell others about the new life in Jesus.

They are also driven by their understanding of

C. WHO JESUS IS

We saw this before – they understand that God **raised Jesus...** and exalted him to his own **right hand** as **Prince** and **Saviour...**

When you **get** who **Jesus is** – when you really take that on board and honour him as **Prince – Lord of all –** and **Saviour** – the only one who can **save** from **sin** – then **that** understanding **drives** you

It puts everything into **perspective**

Yes the world is in a mess – **Ukraine – Nigeria** – Christians killed there in a bombing just last week –

...in our **own** nation – **economic** turmoil – many of our own **lives** – are in a **mess**

But we have **perspective – hope** – a grasp on **reality** – we understand that God is still on the **throne** – that Jesus is his **KING** – that there is **life** and **hope** in **Jesus...**

That **drives** us – **should** drive us – to be people of **hope** and life...!

Driven too by

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D. JOY

Did you notice the apostles' reaction to the flogging they receive?

V41 - *the apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name...* the Name of course – of **Jesus!**

Rejoicing – because they had been counted **worthy of suffering disgrace** for **Jesus**

Do we **get** this?

A **privilege** for **suffering for** Jesus – with Jesus!

That's **extraordinary!!**

If you've ever been given the slightest **hard time** because you trust Jesus – **ridicule** – **criticism** – **rejection** by **family** or friends - made **fun of** – did you consider that a **privilege**? Did it give you **joy!**? //

There's a lot for us to think about there isn't there?

...because we hold **back** on saying **anything** about Jesus – because we fear **all** those things... we don't count it a privilege – but something **awful** – **terrible** – to be **ribbed** – **mocked** – for **following** Jesus – let alone **flogged!** //

We must **toughen up** – become more **bold** – more **courageous** – dare I say – **outrageous** - for **Jesus...**!

Finally as we finish – they were driven by

E. TELLING PEOPLE WHO JESUS IS

V41 again - *the apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name...* then v42 – *Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah*

Don't you **love** this?

Neither their **jail** time, not their **second** arrest, not their **flogging**, nor being told **again** not to **speak** in the **name** of **Jesus**, **stopped** them!! //

They just kept **doing** what they were **doing!!**

...telling **people** the **good news** that Jesus is the **Messiah**. //

We are not the apostles

But we are Jesus' **disciples**... that is – we are **life-long followers of Jesus**... **learners**...

Continually bringing our **life** under his **Lordship**

And telling **others** the **good news** – **glorious** news – that Jesus is the **Messiah** – God's **promised** one who brings **life** – telling people all about this **new life** – telling people where **guilt** can be **wiped out** and **forgiveness found** – that has to be **central** to what we're **on about!**

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The world is in a **mess** – people **around** us are in a **mess** – but we have the **answer** – **JESUS!!**

That should be **driving** us!

Let me finish

I wonder what **drives** you?

the elders were driven by **jealousy, fear, guilt and anger** – and it seems to me – that many people today are driven by **exactly** the **same** – they're **jealous** of the attention other people get or jealous of what they **have**; they have so much **fear** – fear of **missing out**, fear of **threat** – real or imagined... **guilt**... a weight that carry over things in the **past** – and **anger** – because they cannot **control** what is in **front** of them.

is that **you?** //

The only answer is in **Jesus**... come to him and find **relief**... and **hope and life**...!

The **apostles** were **driven** by **new life, obedience**, by who **Jesus is**, by **joy** and by telling **people** who **Jesus is**.

Is that what drives **you?**

Excitement about the new life which is in **Jesus?**

Obedience – you love to obey **God** rather than the expectations or demands of **human beings?**

You're totally **convinced** that **Jesus is Lord and Saviour** – **and that inspires you**...

You're filled with **joy** – and count it a **privilege** when you're **maligned** for **following** and serving **Jesus!**

And you're driven by a **desire** to tell **others** who **Jesus is**... and the **forgiveness** he **offers**...

May it be **so friends**.... May it **always**... be **so!**