

Upside Down | the character of the Jesus movement

Fighting against God

Acts 5:27-42
July 30, 2017

Review: What was most important to you in the encounter between Peter and John and the temple beggar?

Introduction: If you follow Jesus, you're a part of a movement. You're in with others. The movement of Jesus is about the people. Jesus invites us individually but deploys us corporately. House by house, Luke tells us, the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:46-47). It wasn't about the buildings; it was about the people. The biblical word for 'house' (oikos) meant family. Jesus added to their numbers when his followers lived like his family with one another and with their neighbors. The movement wasn't defined by their ideas or rules but by the way they lived together, by the way that Jesus lived in their shared life. The book of Acts invites us to stop coming to church and start being the church. Summer in Seattle offers a wonderful opportunity: Our neighbors are coming out of their houses. Will we welcome them into his? If we do, maybe they'll stay what the Greeks said, "These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also..." (Acts 17:6).

This week is about authenticity and courage to confront authority and the source of this courage.

Pray: Father, help us learn from this text how the movement of Jesus relies on God in its interaction with authority. Amen.

Read: Acts 5:27-42

Discussion:

1. What is the defense of the apostles to the charge of the Sanhedrin of disobeying orders not to teach?

What was so alarming to the Sanhedrin that they felt compelled to give such orders?

2. Gamaliel first had the apostles "put out for a little while". How did this step effect/help his argument?

What was it about this one man Gamaliel that resulted in the Sanhedrin changing direction from wanting to put the apostles to death?

Reflect on the conclusion of the argument in verse 29.

3. The text clearly teaches that there is a cost to following the authority of Jesus in the face of other authority –What helps us to bear the cost?

When (under what circumstances) do we resist authority openly, like the apostles did?

4. The Sanhedrin let the apostles go, but not before they were flogged and ordered again not to speak in the name of Jesus. What is your reaction to this result?

Is this result consistent with any of Jesus' teaching on authority?

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Application: Resisting authority, in this case religious authority, is always controversial; reflect this week on your own convictions about resisting religious authority.

Pray: Father, this text is a challenging lesson for us from the lives of the apostles at the beginning of the church. Help us to live like those apostles. Amen