

Reach One More 4 – ACTS 4

November 12, 2023 – CCC

I want to start with a survey of our congregation today based on date of arrival to CCC. Because in a 102 year old church, we have people from many different decades and much to be thankful for from the years of amazing service.

- New - So, if you have come here since 2020 – you are post covid kids, less than three years at CCC, please stand.
 - You are a dream come true, prayed for, pre-loved, wanted and divinely brought here
 - And you are the group that has lived the hybrid reality of **online and onsite** experiences
- 2010- 2020 – You are the ones who lived through Beyond Belief in 2017 and Double Your Impact in 2017.
 - Before there was a residency, now we have had 60 kids
 - Before there was a **CityCare**, now we have 46 counselors in 5 locations
 - Before there was renovations in the worship center atrium, classrooms, and kids wing.
 - Before the porch belonged to us – when it was a place to test drugs on random people
 - Do you remember, when we did those campaigns we said “this is for people who are not here and kids who have not yet been born?” And since Double Your impact 12 years ago, our kids wing has 400 kids weekly plus some middle schoolers who were not yet born when we cast that vision
- 2000-2010 – You were the outward focus transition team
 - You were the group that believed in the **Mali Hospital** – and raised millions for it and now 50,000 babies have been safely born
 - You were the ones who started key partnerships in North Omaha to bring justice and love to our city.
 - You were also the Atrium group, who funded the space where we can connect right here at CCC and renovated the Student Center for High School Ministry
- 1990-2000
 - You were the **Classroom** decade – expanding our footprint from just this building to the Family Life Center and the Education Wing
- 1980-1990
 - You were the group that moved from the city to **this location**, built this building and changed our name to Christ Community Church
- Before 1980
 - You are the **Omaha Gospel Tabernacle** people. Some of you remember RR Brown. You remember 19th and Douglas building.
 - But mostly, you have been faithful for all of this change and progress, never dreaming that it could be the way it is today, but sacrificing and loving and giving all the way!

Some people might say “I wish I was there... when we dreamed the dream of this property. I wish I was there... when we expanded for kids ministry... when we built the hospital in Africa, when we launched citycare, when we started Upward. Some of you were. You took the faith risk and are watching the fruit

roll in. And we can't go back in time. So we stand on the shoulders of giants and ask "what can we do today?" I think that today's chapter is our most exciting ever! It is about flesh and blood... people. What we can do is reach one more... and one more and one more... just like the apostles.

So hold that thought now and lets go Back into Bible Land – Acts 4. What do they say there?

Please turn there now. And let me give you the context.

Peter and John were headed up to the temple when a beggar who could not walk asked for money. Peter and John said "We don't have silver or gold, but we do have Jesus, so in his name, get up and walk." And he did. And he jumped and praised God and told everyone that Jesus healed him. This Got Peter and John arrested by the Jewish leaders.

When they came before the Sanhedrin, they did not help their case they said "If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness, shown to a beggar, then know this you and ALL the people of Israel – it was by the name of Jesus whom you crucified, but God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed." Well, that did not play well. But what they DID was not illegal... and the crowds loved it... so the sanhedrin let them go with a warning "Don't speak or teach in the name of Jesus". And this is what they said.

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶ The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one. ^{[b]'}^[c]

²⁷ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

So what is the first thing they do when they get told not to talk about Jesus? They go to a prayer meeting where they pray for boldness to talk about Jesus. Their prayers are not like my prayers. I like to pray for security. For safety on the road. For my kids to be comfortable. To put a hedge-a-protection around a certain person. But under threat, all of these things were noticeable absent. What is surprising here?

- They start with God's sovereignty. They acknowledge who is in charge of the universe and even the kings of the earth. The Sanhedrin in their case. They know that God runs the universe and even the government. Even when the government is being stupid. Think about that.
- And in verse 27, even when Herod and Pontius Pilare were crucifying the son of God, it was actually in God's sovereign power. God is firmly in charge.
- When the culture is for us or against us. When the powers in the school or the university or the media or the city hall are doing things that defy morality, wisdom or just common sense, God is still on the throne. And God calls us to do the same thing.

²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Be bold! And pray that God will make us bold! Wherever we are, whatever comes against us, don't get shut down or shut up. It is fascinating that under the threat of the raised sword the disciples asked to be bolder. But for us, under the threat of the raised eyebrow, we are timid in our faith. Timid!

And then, they asked for supernatural power. Power to heal. Power for Jesus -our healer - to be known in their midst.

OH and that prayer made God so happy that he shook the whole building. That would be cool! And they were filled with the Holy Spirit – and spoke the word of God boldly. Did you know that this is the number one sign of spirit filling is that you speak boldly. When the Spirit of God indwells your soul, it spills out of your mouth. People know that you are a Christian – not because you are super nice, but because you talk about Jesus. Boldly and without hinderance.

Today

That is what they did in ACTS. And you have heard what we did in the history of CCC. And the question I am asking is: what will they say about the people in the 20s? How did we make progress for the gospel? And the answer is “They were obsessed with reaching one more – here there and everywhere.” That decade was about people who matter to God, coming to faith one life at a time.

People Here – 1000 kids in an upward sports program, Students of all ages being reached in the student center, the deaf community growing and all of us reaching our 1 more

People there – Across Omaha, partnering with organizations that serve kids. Serving in a local school. Supporting Camp Rivercrest.

People Everywhere – A project in Green City to reach five unreached people groups, funding 600 missionaries in the hardest places around the world. And planting 27 churches among least reached people on the planet.

That is what they will say we tackled in our decade! Boldly and without hinderance!

But wait, there is more. Because the first result of spirit filling is boldness in witness and the second is generosity. See the next verse.

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.

OK, so now we are in crazy land. Nobody claimed their own possessions? Not my field? My cloak? My hoe? My donkey? So they shared everything they had. And they put it at the apostles feet. They didn’t say what the conditions were. They just gave them and trusted the church to use it the best way.

This passage challenges me because I am an American. Everything from the time I am young teaches me that my stuff is my stuff.

- We have closets that look like THIS
- We have basements that look like THIS
- We have cars that look like THIS. That is my midlife crisis. The family buick has become the flying buick.
- And we have this crazy idea that my possessions are mine.

But we learn from the Bible that every blessing comes from God. It is all God’s anyway! And get this, I learned it from Wendell Nelson, so lean in and take notes. “We are most like God when we are generous.” Because God is the generous God who gave us billions of stars, millions of fish, hundreds of thousands of beetles and beauty and diversity everywhere. And... he was so generous that he gave us his son to live here and die for us. And he gave us eternal life and he gave us his holy spirit. And meaning and love and healing.... Do I need to go on? So, when we are generous with material things, we are being like God.

Vision Initiative

So, as we head toward this vision initiative, we are looking at those two ideas from Acts 4 – boldness in sharing our faith and generosity. Boldness is the first step. This is why we are each identifying one person in our lives to be influencing for the sake of the gospel. Now some people have asked “What if I have more? Can I pray for two, three, eight?” Darn overachievers – no! One person limit! Ha... of course. But you are probably an extrovert and I’d say don’t intimidate the introverts. Some will have capacity for 10 or 20.... But everybody... has capacity for one. So come to the Holy Spirit for filling and be bold!

Second idea is generosity. Next Sunday, we are going to fill out our commitment card on both items. I want to show it to you on screen. For two years we have been waiting for this moment. The elders have been praying two years. We have done thirty focus groups, multiple management retreats and listening to God for this moment and I am kind of excited to ask everyone to be in. We do this about every seventh year, so it is not common, but it is a watershed moment for us.

OK, so we will have one per household. There are two boxes that really matter and a couple that are just for you to do your math. And this first box is your ‘one more’. Put the name of one person you are reaching out to in that box. If you are a couple, you can put two names in there.

The next box, – is how much you are currently giving on an annual basis, actually a thirteen month basis. This celebrates, includes and values what you are already doing on your generosity journey. That matters! Actually on a thirteen month basis. So figure one full year plus a December. If you are like me, that is just adding one month. I know some people give once a year in December – so for you it would

be two Decembers only. Others do giving quarterly or when bonuses come... whatever it is for you, just figure one full year plus one December.

The third box is how much more you might give based on a generous, joyful, sacrificial commitment to Jesus first, then this campaign. Wrestle with this third box. What does it mean to give my first and my best to this!!!

The fourth box is one I want to sit on for a while. It says gifts from my stored resources. This is one that relates to our passage and is often overlooked by Christians. Stored resources are something everybody has. Music collections, sports equipment, cars, 401Ks and property all fall under stored resources. It is, essentially the STUFF that you own.

Did you notice that 'from time to time, people sold a house or property and laid it at the apostle's feet.' Wow. They had something that they invested A LOT in... and just gave it to the Lord. You may have a property or a house that you want to do this with. Awesome. You may not! (me!) But you do have stored resources, so I want to teach you something that our friend Jule turned me on to.

- **Redeem or Release**

- It begins with creating an inventory of your stuff. And asking yourself "Am I using this for God's glory?" Start with your most expensive asset and ask if it is being used for God's glory. Say a house. If yes, great! Maybe you are fostering kids, hosting a resident, having a community group in your home etc. Move on to the next item because God has entrusted you with something you are using to his glory. Lets say your car. And you say yes, I am using that for God's glory. Great! Move on!
- Then lets say you get to the next item and it's a **motorcycle**. Truth is, it is just collecting dust in the garage. Or maybe it is the kind of thing that when you take it out, it takes you places you should not be... In this case it is NOT glorifying God, so you have two choices – redeem or release
- **Redeem** – Redeem just means "I am going to start using this for God's glory." Like I am going to use my motorcycle to hang out with my one more who also has a motorcycle – redeemed! Or I am going to cruise and just spend time with God in nature – redeemed!
- **Release** – your other option is to release it. By that, I mean sell it and give the \$ to Reach One more (or another cause). Or, in some cases, give the item itself. So if it is a motorcycle, sell it and give to reach one more. OR... it might be a piece of electronics or a fourth of your wardrobe or, an old video game collection. I know that Kelle and I have a closet full of stuff that needs to be released for kingdom purposes.
- Story – signed golf memorabilia – would love to donate the proceeds to Reach One More
- Story – Stamp collection – would love to sell the stamps and give the proceeds
- Story – my house – saved my life – escape from abusive relationship, remarried and two houses – selling one and giving to reach one more...

- **Scott Momsen Video**

God is going to lead you to something. Something that is generous, joyful, and sacrificial – for you. It is not what your neighbor will say or do. It is between you and Jesus.

The final box is your total. And this is the only financial box that you have to fill out. This is the total of everything – all giving – new and old.

That's it. Next week will be a big moment for us as a church. We have some creative elements to the service that will be meaningful for years to come as we all bring our commitments forward to the altar. This is the week to bring your heart, your name of one more, and your financial commitment.

I want you to know that we have already had about 200 students make their commitment to reach one more! Students were actually the first to lead the way!

And last Friday, we had hundreds of people come early to bring their commitments. The governing board is all in. The staff are all in. Hundreds of others are all in. I am so proud to be a part of this team. But next week is the all-skate. We will ask anybody -new or old – who call CCC home to bring their commitment.

Close

We are going to be a highly-unusual curve wrecking church. We will wreck the curve on reaching people outside the church. We will wreck the curve on generosity. We will wreck the curve on including every single person in the vision. 100%!

Because it is too small of a thing to be ordinary. It is too small of a thing to just do church as usual. It is too small of a thing to rest on 100 years of history. It is too small of a thing to be content with a world that is going to hell in a handbasket.

Our dream, our goal is to make heaven crowded and make it hard to get to hell from Omaha Nebraska. Let's reach one more!