

### *Self-Sacrifice*

- Putting others' needs ahead of my own
  - When is self-sacrifice the right thing to do?
  - What makes it hard?
  - Why do it?
- Prayer
  - ***a courageous prayer***
  - “Father, make us generous, self-giving people”

### **Resurrection Thinking in Action** **Acts 4:32-37**

Chinese: page 1770

Spanish: page 1390

Brown: page 1094

Green: page 746



### *The Beginning of the Christian Church*

The church grew in numbers,  
yet then encountered opposition from authorities  
So they prayed...

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

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.

*Acts 4:29-31*

### *Acts 4:32-37*

**32:** All the Christians were united in soul and possessions

33-34a: • Litotes: emphasize positive by negating the negative

- People generously shared all kinds of things they had
- Voluntary. Still had private ownership

34b-35:

36-37:

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*Acts 4:32-37*

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33-34a: Apostles' witness to the resurrection of Jesus:

- was powerful/bold (miracles?)
- result: generosity by all that met needs of all poor

34b-35:

36-37:

*The ideal for God's people*

However, **there need be [will be] no poor people among you**, for in the land the Lord your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the Lord your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today.

There will **always be poor people** in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.

*Deuteronomy 15:4-5, 11*

*Acts 4:32-37*

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34b-35:

**The early church fulfilled  
the promised ideal of God's people  
through the powerful proclamation  
of the resurrection of Jesus**

36-37:

*Acts 4:32-37*

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34b-35: How? Pattern: the rich sell to give to the poor

36-37: • Many were poor. A few were wealthy.

- Many were displaced
- Gave through the church
  - Avoid obligation/patronage
  - Avoid favoritism or "insiders"
  - Pursue wisdom (gift + growth)

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36-37: Example: Joseph (Barnabas) gave to the apostles to share with those with needs

- Son of “encouragement/exhortation”
  - Same word as for the work of the Holy Spirit
- Advocate for people: for Saul, for John Mark

*The Big Idea*

**The genuine presence of God among His people**

**is demonstrated**

**by bold proclamation of the Resurrection**

**that results in unity**

**in head** Agreement in the Gospel

**heart** Family = fellowship + friendship

**and hands** Sharing so all needs are met

### *Resurrection Thinking*

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that  
 though **he** was **rich**,  
 yet for your sake **he** became **poor**,  
 so that **you** through his **poverty**  
 might become **rich**.

*2 Corinthians 8:9*

For the **joy set before** him he endured the cross,  
 scorning its shame, and sat down at the **right hand of**  
**the throne of God**.

*Hebrews 12:2b*

Jesus: Riches → Poverty for others → Joy & honor  
 Us: “Riches” → Generosity to others → Joy & honor

### **DEATH + DECAY** ~~Resurrection~~ Thinking

I may not have enough for myself and my people  
 When my things are used up, they are gone  
 They may be the last things I get  
 → The more I give away, the less I'll have for us

### **RESURRECTION THINKING**

**The more you plant, the more you'll harvest!**

Jesus: Riches → Poverty for others → Joy & honor  
 Us: “Riches” → Generosity to others → J **LOSS** or

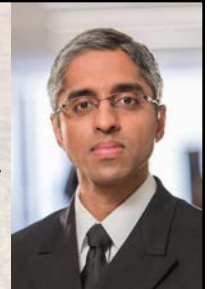
*What are some needs people might have...*

Food, clothing, shelter	→	Gifts (money), hospitality
Skills & abilities & help	→	Serving
Connections	→	Networking
Hope	→	Listening, prayer
Wisdom	→	Counsel, prayer
Feel valued, included	→	Step into their world
Healing	→	Presence, prayer
Love, friendship	→	Time, attention, love

*What are the needs*

Vivek Murthy, 19<sup>th</sup> Surgeon General of the US (2014-17)

- “As a society, we have built stronger WiFi connections over time, but our personal connections have deteriorated.”
- “During my years caring for patients, the most common pathology I saw was not heart disease or diabetes; it was loneliness.”  
pathology = harmful abnormality
- **“Giving and receiving help freely is one of the most tangible ways we experience our connections with each other.”**



US Study: “54 percent of respondents said they sometimes or always feel that no one knows them very well. Even more reported sometimes or always feeling like the people they’re surrounded with ‘are not necessarily with them.’” → **worst for young people**

### *How God meets needs...*

- God could (and does) meet needs directly
- But He would rather transform people to be generous
- Transformation of a people is a **better** miracle than God directly meeting each person's need
- **“The health of any community can be seen by the way it treats its weakest members.”**

“And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them.”

Because people saw the needs and gave gladly & generously

They were promised blessings  
from God  
now in “this Age”  
and in “the Age to come”



### *Application*

- Give generously and joyfully
  - “Remember this: Whoever **sows sparingly will also reap sparingly**, and **whoever sows generously will also reap generously**. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, **not reluctantly or under compulsion**, for God loves a **cheerful giver**.”  
*2 Corinthians 9:6-7*

### *Application*

- Give generously and joyfully
- Give appropriately and helpfully
  - According to real need
    - Watch and listen
  - Always honoring the recipient
    - Asking
    - Empowering
  - To bring growth in the recipient
  - Requires skill, so work with the wise and skillful

### *Application*

- Give generously and joyfully
- Give appropriately and helpfully
- Give personally & **through the church** & elsewhere
  - Avoid need to repay
  - Reduce pride and power in the giver
  - Avoid bias
  - Protect privacy and honor of recipient
  - Pursue a holistic response:
    - a whole person, in a whole society

### *Different structures of generosity in Acts*

#### **Giving well takes creativity and wisdom/skill**

- Elders gave to people daily *Acts 6:1-4*
- Deacons gave to people daily *Acts 6:5-6*
- Collection in Gentile churches to give to Jerusalem church by trusted messengers *Acts 11:27-30*
- Individual hospitality and care *Acts 16:15, 33-34*
- Individuals helped Paul when in prison *Acts 24:23*

### *Self Sacrifice*

- Putting others' needs ahead of my own
  - “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” *Philippians 2:3-4*
- How to do it?
- Resurrection thinking:
  - Blessing is on the other side of self-sacrifice

### *The Big Idea*

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is demonstrated**

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**ENCOUNTERING JESUS**

**TRANSFORMS PEOPLE**

**TO BE AND LIVE MORE LIKE HIM!**