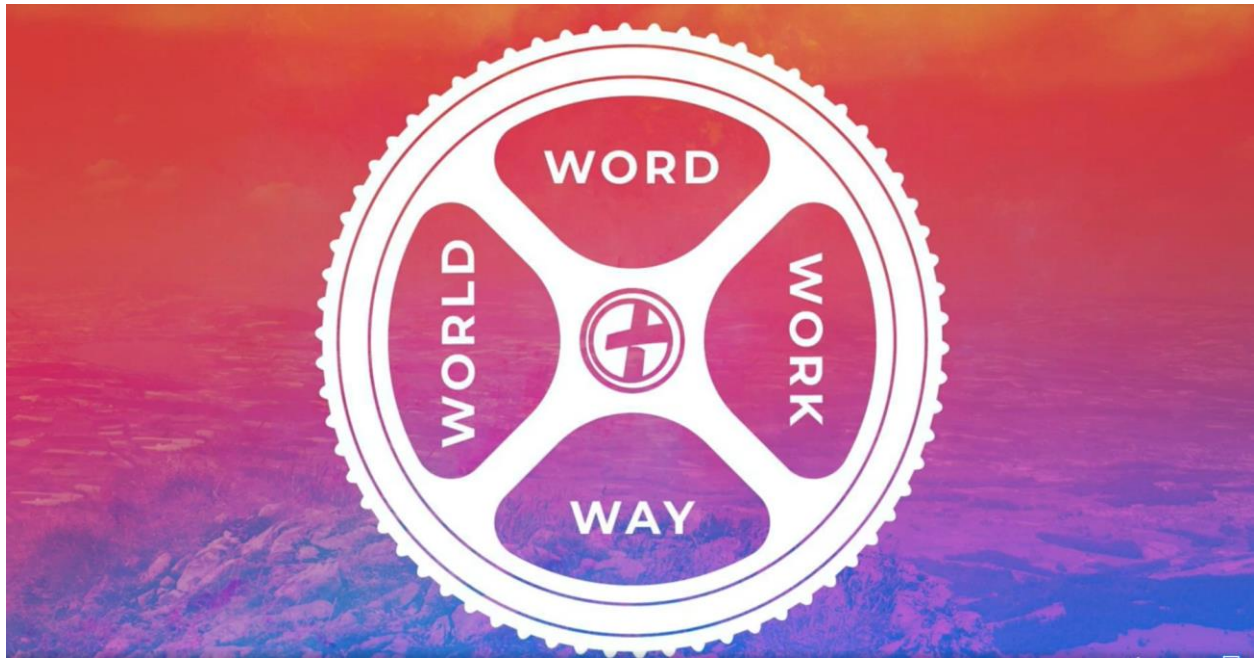




Sermon – 11/06/2022
Phillip Bethancourt

Verses Covered
Acts 4: 31 - 37

Let me invite you to open your Bibles with me. We're going to be back in the book of Acts. Acts chapter 4 this morning. As we continue this series called All In. Wrestling with the question, what would happen if all of us went all in with Jesus. And if you're a guest with us for the first time, whether you're catching it here in the room or by video, welcome home. And I want to say a special word to some of you who might have stepped into Central for the first time today after being with us at our Fall Festival this last Sunday night. Did anybody have a good time at Fall Festival last weekend? I thought so. Yeah I just want to say a big thank you to those that stepped up and served. It was just amazing to see the body of Christ on display being a blessing to our community right here at Central. Now, I want you to know before we jump into God's word this morning that at the conclusion of today's message, we're going to be partaking of the Lord's Supper together, that family meal. And so during the response time, if you haven't already grabbed your elements, I want to invite you to make your way to the tables and pick those up along the way.



We've been talking about what does it look like to go all in with Jesus. And I want you to notice on the screen behind me, you'll see this familiar picture of a gear, this image where we're talking about those elements that need to be at the essence of who we are as a believer if we're living a life fully committed to God. That we need to be all in on the word, and the work. And this morning, we're going to talk about the way. Last week, we spoke about the work of discipleship. What we're called to do as a church. And now, this morning, we're going to talk about the way of community. Who it is that we're connected to and how it is that we are called to live. What we find here in this passage is we see a picture of the way of Christ right here in the early church. We're going to pick up in the middle of a story in Acts chapter 4, starting in verse 31. Peter and the apostles have been proclaiming the Gospel. They've been imprisoned and they've just been set free. And now, they've gathered in an upper room to discuss what's next. Will they cower in fear? Or will they commit in following? And that's the choice each one of us has before us this morning as we wrestle with what it looks like to be all in on the way. So, let's read picking up now in Acts chapter 4, beginning in verse 31. Here's what it says.

³¹And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. ³²Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. ³³And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. ³⁶Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, ³⁷he sold his field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Let's pray together.

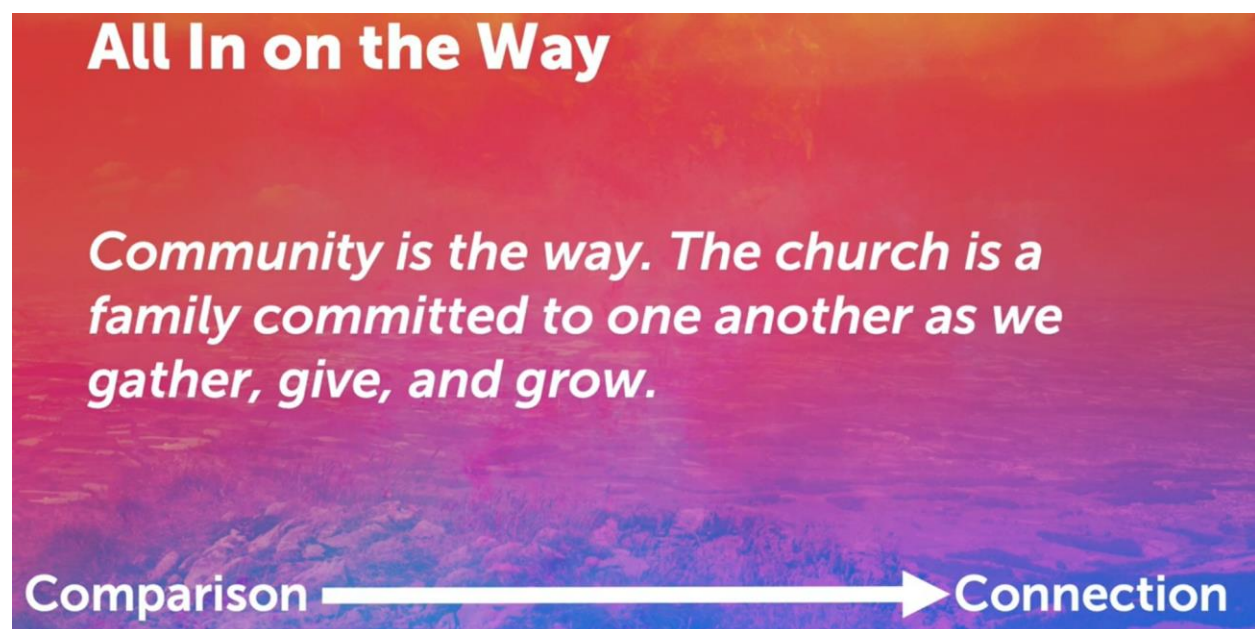
Lord, right here in this text, we see the way You are at work in the early church. And Lord, we are declaring this morning, we've longed for that same reality right here within the walls of this church this morning. Lord, the people prayed and the place was filled with Your Spirit. They were overwhelmed by Your power. They were united together in Your presence and that's our longing this morning, God. That we would see You high and lifted up. To be desired more than anything that this world has to offer. To have our hearts and our minds captivated, not by the cares of this world but by the cross of Jesus Christ. And I'm asking in this time, God, that You would pour out Your Spirit in a way that unites us as one, brings us together as a community of faith. So that we might live in a way pleasing to You. And we ask these things in Christ's name. Amen.

Over the course of the last week, the Aggie community has been buzzing, and even the national media has been talking about a first-time performer who took a big step of action last weekend in the Aggie football game against Ole Miss. He did something that a first-time performer hadn't done perhaps in history at Kyle Field. But then, this yesterday in the game, he was absent. He didn't get to take part in any action. You maybe assuming I'm talking about the new freshman quarterback that played so well against Ole Miss. But in fact, I'm talking instead about a man you may have never heard of by the name of Greg Bludau. We got a picture of him right here on the screen that's going to pop up. You'll see the reason why he made national headlines. He found a possum in the stands at Kyle Field. It's true. And he saw that and he bare-handed it, picked it up, and walked it out of Kyle Field. Okay, and the reason I heard about that story is not because of the fact that it made national news all around the country and everybody was talking about it. The reason I heard about it was before the game even started when some of our extended family who were sitting in that section of Kyle Field said, "Dad, you'll never believe what my niece Anna found under her seat." She's the one that first saw the possum. She freaked out. She didn't know what to do. And this man who was passing by heading to his seats, who didn't know our family, didn't have any connection to them. Saw them in need. Or maybe the better word is desperation. I mean, what would you do if you found a possum under your seat at an Aggie football game? And he took that need and tapped into his experience and his skills to meet a need for someone that he had never met, to pour himself out for the sake of someone else. And I want you to see, we got a little video of the moment. You're going to see my brother and sister-in-law standing right behind him when it happens. Everybody's freaking out. Notice how cool, calm, and collected he is. Check it out on the screen here.

So I mean, what a season, right? You can't make this up. I mean, think about it. He grabs the thing by the tail. He marches it up the aisle. He walks it through the concourse. I don't know if he took the elevator down, the escalator. I'm not sure and then it, the, the article said, he walked it across Wellborn Road and released it by the railroad tracks. And I noticed this week when we're deciding which family members are going to sit in which spots in the field. It seemed like there were plenty of seats available in that section for me and my family to sit in this week. And I, I'm happy to report there were no possums present in the playing of the game yesterday. Now, why am I telling you that story this morning when we're talking about a commitment to the church? Well, it's not because I'm concerned some of you are playing possum with the commitment to the church. Although that might be right. The reason is because in a situation like this, you had people who had no other reason to be together. No other reason to be committed to one another. Who in this situation were gathered together and a desperate need arose and someone with means and someone with heart and someone with commitment rose to the occasion to meet that need for the

sake of a greater purpose. And in a much greater way, that's the picture we see on display right here in Acts chapter 4. This early church in need, in desperation, and they're coming together as one. As they gather and they give and as they grow, they're living a life on mission and commitment to a way. In fact, if you were to go back and read the book of Acts as we're doing in our daily Bible reading plan as we journey through this all-in series through both the book of Luke and Acts. One of the things you'll notice is in that in the book of Acts, one of the most common ways to refer to the early church is to refer to the church as the way. You remember, Jesus in John 14 says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. God has designed a path, a way of life for each one of us to live if we want to honor Him. And that path, that way, is a way of community. And so, this morning, Central family, if we want to be the kind of body of Christ we see on display right here in Acts chapter 4, it's calling us to embrace the of a true community that will show up as we gather and we give and we grow together.

So, let's look at that first reality. Now, starting back in verse 31, the text is calling us to recognize that the way of Christ calls us to gather together. So, I want you to notice back up on the screen with me a slide we showed several weeks ago at the start of the series. It just gives you a snapshot, a summary of what it looks like to go all in with the way.



Here's what we've been talking about. What the slide will show you in just a moment is the reality that we are called to community. That community is the way. That we should see the church as a family that's committed to one another as we gather, give, and grow. And when we go all in on the way, what happens is it moves us from comparison to connection. We no longer look at others around us as threats to be neutralized or opponents to be defeated; but as family members to embrace as a band of brothers and sisters to go to battle alongside of. And that's what we find on display here. The people of God gather in the place of God and pursue the presence of God through prayer to God. And when that happens, it changes everything. When the Spirit of God moves, it transforms the nature of their gathering. See, they go all in on the way and several unmistakable things take place. You'll notice back in 31, you'll see that their gathering is marked by spiritual boldness. That's what it says there. When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered

together was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. So, think about it. They're facing persecution. They've been set free. They're gathering to seek God on what to do in prayer and as that takes place, the Holy Spirit comes in power. It says the room was shaken. Maybe the closest parallel we would have in recent moments was last night, game six at Minute Maid. That home run by Yordan Alvarez over center field. The entire stadium erupting in celebration. But it wasn't the people causing the shaking in this moment. It instead was the presence of God. He shows up and He shakes the room. And what happens is He fills them with a Gospel boldness. In other words, their boldness in prayer before the throne of God empowers them. That boldness in their proclamation before the throngs of people around them. They receive that power and begin to use it in a way that drives them with Gospel boldness. So, if we want to go all in on the way as a church, one of the realities we need to be wrestling with is do we embody that same type of boldness that we see right here? I mean, look at verse 31. At the end there, the way it talks about this reality. They continue to speak the word of God with boldness. Is that true of us as a church? That we're speaking boldly of Jesus Christ in our community and in our dorm rooms and in our homes. And even though we may not experience a shaking building to fuel our boldness this morning, we are built on an unshakable promise that fuels that boldness. That on this rock, I will build my church. Where two or three are gathered in my name, so I am with them. The strength of the promise supplies the strength for our boldness.

But look back at the text, that's not the only thing that happens. When God is at work, when the people go all in on the way, they're gathering is also marked by spiritual unity. That's what we notice back in verse 32 when it says,

³²Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of these things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.

I just want you to think for a second about how messy this moment would be. You've had thousands of people who had never heard the name of Jesus coming to Christ and putting their trust in Him and beginning to follow Him along the way of community in the church all at once. They're bringing their wounds, their scars, their burdens, their addictions, their problems, there's nothing clean and neat about it. And yet the text tells us here in verse 32 that they come together in spiritual unity. You see the way it describes them at the beginning of the verse. It says that they are of one heart and one soul. They are one in purpose. They're all in on the way that God has called them to. They're united together as one and that that unity shows up not just in their purpose but in their perspective. That's why at the end of verse 32 it tells us, they had everything in common. See, when the Spirit is at the center of our pursuit of the way of God through the church and through His community, one of the things you can always count on is spiritual unity. That God will bring His people together as one. You see, they gathered together. They were of one heart and one mind. And one of the challenges I want to lay before us this morning about one next step we can take to be all in in this pursuit of spiritual unity is through taking the step of church membership right here at Central in our local congregation. You could see the picture here. They're gathered together, there's a sense of accountability, dependence, reliance, unity that's on display. And in the modern church, one of the best manifestations of that reality is through church membership. Church membership is that moment where you go from dating the bride of Christ to put in a ring on it. It's the moment that you go from being on the sidelines to joining the team.

And as believers, we can't look at Jesus and say, I want to go all in with you but not the church . Because if it's true, and it is, that the church is the bride of Christ, you can't have the bridegroom and reject the bride. Why does church membership matter? Why do we see them gathering together as one in spiritual unity in the way we try to replicate through membership in a congregation like this? Well, for one, it's because it's biblical. I mean, when you think about the New Testament, it gives us these images of the nature of the church as a body, as a temple, as a family, as a house. And how do you know what portions are members of your body? How do you know who's a part of your family? How do you know which rooms are in your house? It's because they've been marked out. They've been set apart. They have been united together in commitment to one another. And church membership is the way to reflect that reality today.

But it's not just biblical, it's also spiritual. Church membership is one of the means by which God uses His grace poured out through the way of Christ in the church to grow us and to deploy us for the sake of His Gospel. So, when you step into membership at a church like Central, here's what happens. You are identifying these are the people that God has called me to do life with, to go all in with, who I am entrusting for my spiritual development, and I am being empowered for my spiritual deployment. It's a place where your faith can come alive like nowhere else. But it's not spiritual. It's also personal. It's personal. And what I mean by that is we've been talking for weeks about what it goes, looks like to go all in with Jesus. And when we become membership of a local church, a local congregation, a local embassy of the kingdom of God, it is us declaring before a watching world that our first and greatest allegiance is to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That we want to join band of brothers and sisters uniting together as one for the sake of the Gospel in the same way we see them back in Acts 4:32 of one heart and one mind. So, I don't know how long you've been here at Central. It might be for a short time or for a long season. And you hear us week in and week out talking about taking a step towards membership here as a congregation. And the default question you may have for yourself is, why should I become a member? And underlying that is often, what's in it for me. What benefits do I receive? What difference does it make? But what if we turn that question on its head? What if as we see here in Acts 4, we don't ask the question, why should I join the spiritual unity of the church through membership? But why would I not? Why would I sit on the sidelines? Why would I be near the game but not in it? Why would I do the equivalent if it's like a longtime boyfriend and girlfriend that decide to move in together? And you get all the benefits of marriage without the commitments. And what we know to be wrong in a relationship, we're tempted to do the exact same thing when it comes to committing to the bride of Christ in the church. We see this pulled towards spiritual unity right here, and the question we should be asking ourselves is not why but why not? And here's the great news. If you've never really thought before about the biblical picture of church membership and what it looks like to take that step, the good news for you this morning is immediately following our in the worship service today, right out these doors in the Grand Room is our next New Member Workshop. And if you have not yet made that commitment, I want to challenge you to come today. Now, by walking in that room, you don't automatically commit to joining the membership of our church. In fact, we wouldn't want you to do it. Because we want you to know more about who we are, what we're doing, where we're going, so that you can prayerfully consider how you fit into that. And we're so invested in this reality that for this week, if you're one of the college students here, we're not even meeting as normal in the gym. We're asking all y'all to come and join us to just taste and see who we are and what we're about. Because you maybe looking at your life and say, "Well, I'm only here another two or three years. I'm not sure if I want to go to that level of commitment." But if you're not ready to commit now in a setting like this, what makes

you think when you come out of school and you launch out into the real world and your career might take you from place to place every two to three years, that you're going to be willing to do the same thing then? Let's go all in together. This life in Christ is not designed to be lived on its own and we want to walk with you. We want to stand with you. We want to strengthen you in the kind of spiritual unity that we see on display right here in Acts chapter 4.

But there's one thing you'll also notice there as we pick up in verse 33. That when the Holy Spirit falls, it doesn't just come with a spiritual unity as they gather but also a spiritual power. And look at this power on display down in verse 33.

³³And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

You see what happens here is that God moves in the middle of the mess. His power is poured out. It's a power as it shows us there in the second half of the verse. It's for the sake of proclamation. Notice what it says, they were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. When the Spirit moves in them, it enables the Spirit to move through them. They declare the truth about the risen Jesus, how He went to the cross to die for our sins, how He suffered in our place, how He defeated the grave and death, and He's raised to walk in newness of life. And Jesus changed everything for them. It shows up in the power that's on display. You know, I'm just curious by showing hands. How many of you have ever, when you've been traveling on a vacation, stayed in someone else's place while you're on the road? Not a hotel. Maybe it might be like a friend's house, an Airbnb, something like that. Let me see your hands. I know lots of you have done that. My guess is, when you go into someone else's home, you live in that in a way that's different than when you live in your own house. You see, there's a difference between when you're a renter and a resident. You come into that home with two different perspectives. A renter only cares about the short term; not the long term. The renter primarily is focused on, what's in it for me, what benefits does it provide? When the resident is focused on the long-term strength and health of the home itself. The renter is in a situation where they're wrestling with, how does it make me better off? The resident that's thinking about, how can I make all of us better off? The Bible calls the church the house of God. The question we need to be wrestling with is are we renters or are we residents? Are we all in? Is this a place I see for my spiritual nourishment and my personal convenience or do we see this the way that Acts 4 sees it as a place to pour our lives into as a way that God is calling us to so that we might live in a way that honors Him.

As we go on in the text, we see something else continuing to happen. We see that when the Lord is at work in our midst, it doesn't just reshape how we gather together but also how we give together. And let's pick that up back in verse 34. And look, I would just want to say from the start, when a preacher starts to talk about money, it makes people uncomfortable. Nobody's more uncomfortable than the preacher when he talks about it though. Let's be honest. And I know it's especially difficult in a season where we're right on the cusp of a global recession. Where inflation is absorbing more and more of your bank account and your budget. But here's one thing I know. When you go all in with something, your money is designed to follow. That's why Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount that where your treasure is, your heart will be also. There's this connection between our heart's desire and our lives investment. And what we find here in Acts 4 is on display that the early church lives with a reflection of the reality that they've been transformed. They don't just take the invitation to gather together, they also take the invitation to

invest together. They go all in with their funds. You see it there in verse 34 the way they sacrifice their treasure. It says,

³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold.

I mean, think about the radical sacrifice here. These may have been the only assets the people possessed. That house that they hold, that they own, that land that had been passed down from generations to generations and they sell those things. They bring the funds and they invest it for the sake of someone else. It is a radical sacrifice. Here's the way I heard one pastor put it. He says, the early church was strikingly different from the culture around it in this way. He said, you see, the pagan society was stingy with its money and promiscuous with its body. A pagan gave nobody their money and practically gave everybody their body and the Christians came along and gave practically nobody their body and gave practically everybody their money. Wow. Talk about a transformation. They begin giving together. They go all in on the way in order to meet needs and look at what happens. What we find down later in the verse, in verse 35, is that we see that their radical sacrifice leads to a refueled mission. So, notice the way that it maximizes their impact. It says in verse 35,

³⁵they laid it at the apostle's feet and it was distributed to each as any had need.

And just to put that in perspective, I think a great glimpse of what this looks like is what just happened this past weekend at the Fall Festival. So, for weeks, we've been asking you to bring candy, to provide for the community and the week before it, all our team gathers together for what we call candy day. And we snip off all those bags and we pour them into those different brown bags. Well, let's be honest, at least most of it. We gotta take a little taxation for the labor that you're completing in the process, right? You would do the same thing. I know you would. But we fill those bags and what happens is we take those bags and we go out on Sunday night and all of you are stepping up through your life groups to volunteer in these different booths and play those games with kids and to give them that candy and watch that smile light up when they receive it. And what happens is when you man that station, what do we do? We come and we take that bag full of candy and we lay it at your feet. We put it right there so that then you're empowered to use it to meet the needs that are in front of you. Do you see the parallel? The people come together as one in Acts 4. They supply from their resources. They lay it at the feet of the apostles. They trust their leadership to put their people in a position to be empowered to use it as they see need. That's why we should be committed to giving together as a church. That we can do more together with our resources. And I'm not just talking about money. I'm talking about our time, our talent, our treasure, every aspect of our life. When we combine it, we can do more for the sake of the Gospel than if we are operating on our own. That's the calling. That's the picture that we see right here on display. We've been spending some time at this table over the last few weeks. You remember, we've been talking about how everyone of us can live in one of two ways. There are one or one of two bowls that represent our life. And I want you to think specifically today as we look at these. At these be a representation of your resources, your money, your budget. Remember, we've been talking about this rice that it's made up of the things that fill our lives. The time or in this case, the money that's gone before we even get started. And what you and I know is that these past couple years since the pandemic, it's like we've added water to this rice and it's begun expanding with inflation. It's filled up more and more of the bowl. And we talked

about in week one, the same reality that we'll think about today when it comes money. That we'll spend our money on sports. We'll spend our money on our family and our marriage. We'll spend our money climbing the ladder at church. We'll spend our money on entertainment. We'll have to spend our money in ways we didn't expect on emergencies. And especially for you college students, maybe this is an underrepresentation of the size. You're going to spend it on the cost of your education. The challenge is, we start with those fillers. We cover those other things. And then there's nowhere to fit the mission of God into the funding of your life. And so what happens is when we come to our budget and we live a bold one approach to our budget, we look at everything else we need to pay for and when we get to the end of the month or the end of the year, we ask ourselves the question, what's left for Jesus in the church? Let's do the best we can. But what if we took a different way? What if our heart was to go all in on the word, to go all in on the work, to go all in on the way. To go all in on the world. And we said, Lord, I'm going to provide for these things. First, I'm going to give my first and best to You. And I don't know how the spreadsheet's going to turn out. I don't know if it's going to be enough. But I see in Acts 4 a people that went in in giving together and I trust that if I do that too, I can believe the promise You give me in Matthew to not worry about tomorrow. Tomorrow's got enough worry about itself but as Matthew 6:33 says, I'm going to seek first the kingdom with my giving and trust that You'll add all these things unto me. That's a test of faith. And it's a test of faith this text is telling us we're called to take together. They gathered together, they gived together, gave together. I guess is a more proper English translation of that.

But there's one more thing I want you to notice before we close. They also grow together. They come together as one. And as they gather, as they give, something incredible happens. There's a growth that comes from God and we see it on display here at the end of the passage in verses 36 and 37 in the life of this man named Barnabas. It tells us there about him that he's a Levite. That means he was a worker in the temple, helping to perpetuate the religious practice of the Jewish people. It tells us that he was from Cyprus, this island nation. He wasn't part of mainland Israel. And so, you can't help but wonder where did he come to faith? Is it possible that Barnabas was one of the multitudes that were sitting in the crowd of Pentecost when all the nations were gathered together? And he heard Peter telling of Jesus. He heard Peter speaking of the sin that Barnabas knew was in his life. The shame and the guilt that he felt. The way that he tried to make his life right before God but he had never been able to find a peace on his own. Maybe some of you feel like that this morning. But he also heard Peter talk about this man named Jesus. That God had sent His only Son to live a perfect life, to die in Barnabas' place, to take on his sin, to satisfy the wrath that he deserved. And three days later, up He comes from the grave, not just to set free Barnabas, but to set for you and me. And everyone of us who trust in Jesus for salvation. So now he, this new believer, steps into this messy church and he's seeking ways to grow. To grow together, to figure this whole thing out as a Christian. And I want you to see the way it describes him. Because the pattern we see in Barnabas is a pattern that God is calling each one of us to today as we grow together. The first thing we'll notice in verse 36 is that we are called to be an encouragement. So, look at the way that Barnabas is described in verse 36. It says, his name was Joseph who is also called by the apostles, Barnabas. And then, Luke gives us this little parenthesis to tell us the translation of that means just in case we don't know it. He says, Barnabas means son of encouragement. And that word encouragement, it means to strengthen, to empower, to exhort. Maybe the closest parallel we have in our modern culture is to coach. It's like that challenge to push people forward. I remember being at one of our son's middle school football games this season. He plays at Brazos Christian School. And I overheard the offensive line coach exhorting

and encouraging the line before they went out on the field. And he look him and he said, in the most Christ-like way possible, flatten everyone in front of you. A son of encouragement. A man of exhortation. That's who Barnabas was. That's who we're called to be. If we want to grow together, it comes often as a result of us pressing each other forward in encouragement. So, the question we need to be wrestling with is, when's the last time you showed up to church on a Sunday and one of the front-of-mine things that you were focused on is, how might I be an encouragement to someone else here today? How could I live a life of encouragement like Barnabas? But it's not just in his encouragement, it's also in his example. And I want you to see that as we finish the passage in verse 37. It tells us,

³⁷he sold the field that belong to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostle's feet.

So, he doesn't just encourage them with his words. He encourages them with his works. He doesn't just look around at everybody else doing this and say, "Hey, y'all are doing awesome. Keep selling. Get it in while the real estate market's still hot." He steps up and goes first. He sets the example. He leads the way. And what God is looking for in His church are men and women who will lead the way. Who's going to set the example? Who's going to push things forward? Who's going to do whatever it takes for the sake of the Gospel? That's one of the reasons I can't wait for next week. When we get the chance to bring back our get in the game Sunday. We're asking you to wear your team's favorite gear. We're going to have a focus on serving and spending ourselves for the sake of the Gospel. We're going to ask you to make a commitment to how the Lord is leading you to serve in 2023. And I want this example of Barnabas to be ringing in our ears next week. One who didn't just encourage others with his words, but he lived it out with his example, with his works, with his practice. You see, when you look at this church as a whole, you see in Acts 4, a community that is gone all in on the way. It shows up as they gather, as they give, and as they grow. And as we turn our hearts to the Lord's supper, I just can't help but to think what a fitting text this is for us today. Because in just a moment when we partake of this bread and this cup, we are declaring a reality that we see on display here. That our first allegiance is to Jesus Christ. I want you to know this family meal is for you. If you've met Jesus, you're walking with Him faithfully as a baptized believer. We invite you to this table as we remember what Christ has done for us on the cross. And as we ready our hearts to do that, I want to remind you during the response song, to make your ways to this table to prepare yourself for this chance to respond to the goodness of God. And as we do that, let's take a moment to pray together now. And as your heads are bowed, I just want to say a word to some of you who maybe wrestling with. Is this now the time to take a next step towards membership? You know, normally, we come down to the front and you begin that process right here. But I recognize some of you may not be comfortable taking that step. And if it's easier for you just at the end of the service to go directly to the New Member Workshop, that's okay. We just want you to follow after Jesus by uniting yourself to this congregation if that's where He's leading you.

Let's pray together now.

Father, we're declaring this morning as a church that our hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. Lord, that You have called us to be of one heart and one mind. That the path You've chosen for us to take is not designed to be lived on our own but is instead one to be lived in community. And I pray that even now You would be stirring our heart's affection and our mind's attention to what more we could be doing to go all in with this community of faith you've

called us to here at Central. And as we prepare our hearts to take the bread and cup, I pray that you would convict us of sin, convict us of complacency, and help us to walk faithfully in the newness of life that You've called us to. We ask these things in Jesus name. Amen.