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| ***Title:*** | Man May Be Fooled But You and God Never Will Be |
| ***Text:*** | Acts 4:36-5:11 |
| ***Subject:*** | Why did Ananias and Sapphira lie instead of honoring God with their actions? |
| ***Compliment:*** | Because they were trying to impress men. |
| ***CIT:*** | Ananias and Sapphira, motivated by their own selfish desires, lied to make themselves look better before men, but God, the audience they should have been most concerned about, was not impressed. |
| ***Purpose:*** | To show the church the value of integrity and the cost of poor character. |
| ***Homiletic Idea:*** | A cheap life and an upset God is all we get by having more, giving less, and saying it’s all in any area of life! |
| ***Intro:*** |  |

There was a boy who was responsible for keeping watch over a small village. The reason he had to keep watch is because the area the village was located in had a rather large wolf population. Most days it was really quiet and the boy got very bored dispensing his duty.

When first given the responsibility he jumped on it because he saw it as an opportunity for glory and honor. Being the protector of the village would give him respect and it would really impress his friends.

One day it had occurred to him that nothing would ever happen and he would simply waste his time up on the hill, remain a nobody, and still miss out on all the fun things his friends were doing. This was unacceptable and so he devised a plan that would get him the glory he desired, and allow him the freedom to have the fun he wanted.

He remembered an old story told by his grandfather of a watcher like himself who, instead of just sitting and waiting for wolves to raid, went out and hunted all of the wolves down ridding the village of the need of a watcher and winning great admiration in the process.

Now he may have been a young boy but he was no fool. He knew well that he could not on his own actually take on the wolves himself. That wasn’t necessary anyways, because he had never even seen a wolf and he had been doing his job for 3 whole weeks. Instead all he needed to do was convince the village that it was so.

He went out into the woods and hid out for 3 days. When he returned, he was carrying one single wolf skin. He told the village this was a token signifying the work he had done. The area was cleared of wolves, a good thing indeed, had it been true.

He got the praise he wanted, though it was undeserved, and he was relieved of his post, but pretending to do something is not the same as actually doing it, and in the end he put the village in grave danger.

Killing the one wolf was a good thing. However, it was done for the wrong reason, and it isn’t the same as killing them all.

This is similar to what we find taking place here.

CIT Stated: Ananias and Sapphira, motivated by their own selfish desires, lied to make themselves look better before men, but God, the audience they should have been most concerned about, was not impressed.

1. ***The deed done was good. 4:36-5:2***
   1. Barnabas sold his land.
   2. He gave the money to the church.
   3. You never hear anything else about it.
   4. Ananias and Sapphira do the same thing only they don’t give all (no big deal).
2. ***The problem was they were motivated by selfishness. 5:3-4, 8***
   1. Selfishness - concerned excessively or exclusively with oneself **:** seeking or concentrating on one's own advantage, pleasure, or well-being without regard for others ~ Merriam-Webster.com
   2. They didn’t give all that they sold the land for, which by itself is no big deal.
   3. The problem is what they told the apostles.
      1. They sold it for so much.
      2. They gave less.
      3. They said they gave all.
   4. Peter asks why, but the answer, though not dealt with, is selfishness.
      1. They didn’t have to give anything.
      2. They didn’t have to sale their land at all.
      3. They could have given any portion of the sales price that they wanted.
      4. So why do what they did, sale the land for one amount, give another, and lie?
         1. To save face and hide the fact that they didn’t have the faith to trust God to take care of them (as if that is what would have been perceived anyway)? = selfish
         2. Perhaps they felt pressure to meet a certain standard or perform a certain way, and they didn’t want to disappoint? = selfish
         3. Perhaps they were just greedy and this was just an easy way to impress man and/or gain influence in the church? = obviously selfish and probably right…
         4. Etc…
3. ***The motive mattered, but not in the way they might have hoped. 5:3a, 4b-10***
   1. The motive would not, even if entertained (which it wasn’t), have served to excuse what they had done.
   2. The motive only served to basically erase any potential good the deed had.
   3. In the end they simply lied to God regardless of the motive, and judgment followed (which is no new concept, though this measure of judgment meted out here is a bit unique).
   4. ***Man may be fooled, but you and God will never be!!!!***
4. ***Their story served to help others avoid the pitfall they jumped into! 5:11***
   1. All who witnessed or heard inherited a great fear of God.
   2. Not the type of fear where one is afraid or terrified.
   3. The healthy fear or respect that compels one to listen and consider.
5. ***The fact is Pretending to do something is not the same as actually doing it!***
   1. They really gave the money they gave even though they didn’t give all and they lied about it.
   2. But their actions make clear that they weren’t really interested in being a blessing to the church and sacrificing to do so.
   3. They were actually more interested in purchasing the admiration of men and the price they paid to the church was simply the cost of that admiration in their eyes.
   4. Because their desire wasn’t really to give the money for the right reason they totally missed out on the benefits of doing so.
      1. Had they not given all because their faith wouldn’t allow it and they were honest about it, they would have been blessed for giving what they did.
      2. Had they not given all because their faith wouldn’t allow it and they were honest about it they would have positioned themselves in such a way that God could have helped increase their faith later.
      3. Had they even gone to God as soon as the temptation entered their hearts the outcome might have been different altogether.

Note: The fact is pretending to do something is not the same as actually doing it and that always catches up with you eventually!

***Application:***

We don’t have Peter standing in front of us telling us like it is, but God knows and we know, and unfortunately ***(Homiletic Idea Stated:) a cheap life and an upset God is all we get by having more, giving less, and saying it’s all in any area of life!***

* Consider your efforts in the worship service for instance.
  + You sing, a good thing.
    - Why do you sing?
    - We know the right answer, and that is the answer we would all probably give (which if it isn’t true that makes it a lie), but I mean really. Why do you sing?
      * Is it because that is what we are supposed to do during that time?
      * Is it because we really enjoy hearing ourselves sing and so we belt it out?
      * Is it because we really want others to hear us sing and so we belt it out?
    - Any of the above answers are selfish and cheap and that is what we trade the real benefits of genuinely wanting to praise the Lord for.
  + You listen to the preaching, a good thing.
    - Why do you listen to the preaching?
    - We know the right answer, and that is the answer we would all probably give (which if it isn’t true that makes it a lie), but I mean really. Why do you listen to the preaching?
      * Is it because that is what we are supposed to do?
      * Is it because we want to grow in our knowledge and intellectual prowess in spiritual matters?
      * Is it because we want the pastor to see what a good Christian we are?
    - Any of the above answers are selfish and cheap and that is what we trade the real benefits of genuinely wanting to grow and have our lives transformed by the work of Christ for.
* Consider your efforts in marriage.
  + Ask yourself why?
  + And be honest!
* Consider your efforts in financial matters.
* Consider your efforts as parents.
  + Are you really interested in training up your children so they will walk with the Lord and bring Him glory?
  + Or does it really have more to do with not wanting them to embarrass you in public, and so you try to teach them to obey?
* Consider your efforts as a friend.
* Consider your efforts as an employee.
  + Are you really interested in pleasing your employer?
  + Or are you actually interested in just doing whatever it takes to impress him/her in hopes of getting a promotion or raise?

***If honest answers aren’t the right answers that is fine because honest acknowledgment of where you are enables God to get you where you need to be!***

There are other areas of natural accountability in life, and we usually don’t feel the need to give an answer with regard to the integrity of our actions until the natural accountability factors in life start calling us out.

* Doing what’s right in worship, for the wrong reason, robs us of the benefits of genuine worship. Worship loses its joy, and we are tempted to say we gave all as a way to save face when we walk away not willing to make the effort anymore.
* Doing what’s right in marriage for the wrong reason is taxing, and will only last for so long, and when we quit we will claim to have given all when really we know that there was more to give, but really we were too selfish.
* Our finances will tell on us when we pretend to want to be responsible and honor the Lord, but we really don’t.
* Our children will tell on us when we pretend to want to raise them in honor to the Lord, but our motives are really much more self-serving than that!
* Eventually the job gets old and we don’t want to do it anymore if we pretend to have the best interest of our employer in mind when in reality it is only ourselves we are looking out for.

In the end we will say, “I’ve done all I can! My hands are clean!” But really we know, and God knows, and He isn’t impressed and neither are we!

***Conclusion:***

In the end it is really better to be honest with ourselves and with God. Serve Him with integrity. Have in your heart a pure desire to please Him, not impress man, and God will make you into a person that does both!

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| ***Dates and Locations Delivered*** | |  |
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