

A Refuge for Outreach, Part I

23 When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, 25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

“Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?
26 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed’—

27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. 29 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” 31 And 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.

32 Now 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. 33 And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 34 There 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 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. 36 Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, 37 sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.

Sermon Outline:

The example of the early church calls us as a Spirit-filled people to pursue the health of the fellowship in order to reach the world. We are called to provide a refuge from which to do mission — a refuge for outreach. There are at least two characteristics of a church that provides a refuge: **unity & generosity**.

I. **Unity (32-37):** Unity does not mean “all the same.” It means that there is unity around three essential things.

- A. Truth
- B. Purpose
- C. Love

II. **Generosity (32-37):** Unity in love is expressed in generosity. We may tend to think of generosity only in financial terms; however, generosity means our time, treasures, and our talents. Often simply showing up, that is, following the example of Jesus by being present, is a profound demonstration of generosity.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you tend to view the church as a place of refuge for yourself and/or others? If not, what other view(s) of the church do you have?
2. How has the church been a place of refuge for you?
3. How do you or could you contribute to making the church a place of refuge? What time, talents, or treasures could you contribute?
4. How do you tend to define “unity” as it relates to the church? Do you think of it as everyone acting and thinking the same way?
5. In what ways might you tend to take personal commitments and make them the core of membership in the church?
6. What “non-core” personal preferences might you need to sacrifice in order to be unified in truth, purpose, and love with the church as a whole?
7. How has Christ sacrificed so that we might be unified to Him?
8. How does Christ’s presence with us teach us the importance of being present in others’ lives?