

I know it sounds strange but this morning we are going to begin by talking about a curse. (pause) By a show of hands how many of y'all have heard this curse before; "May you live in interesting times." (pause for response) Y'all have heard that curse before? Yeah? There is another curse that is just a little less well known. It says, "May you have smart, strong willed children." Or as my mother used to say, "Just you wait. Your time is coming. You'll have children one day and then all of this stuff you are doing right now will be visited back upon you." Have y'all ever heard or said that one before? (pause and raise my hand) Little did she know it would be visited back upon me times four. My oldest has started doing something I must have done as a child, and now it's spreading to Audrey a little. When Karen or I tell Evan to do something Evan has to put in 3-5 points about something he needs to say. It's a way of both procrastinating and trying to get out of doing whatever it is we asked him to do. Now, don't get me wrong. I would love to have long discussions with Evan about Pokemon, or dinosaurs, or what he's been watching on TV, or answer his questions about the Avengers and comic books, but with four very busy and active kids and my crazy schedule here at church there are some times it is just not possible. When I tell Evan to clear his dishes, or make his bed I just need him to do what I asked. (pause) Sometimes I feel guilty for raising my voice with him about it because I know I did the same thing when I was a child. So I have started to wonder if that is a behavior of those who are children of the faith as well.

I think Ananias was a lot like Evan. (pause) Maybe Ananias was a bit like me. Ananias has a vision and responds to God by saying, "**Here I am, Lord**" (Acts 9:10). God tells Ananias to, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for a man of Tarsus named Saul; for behold he is praying, and he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight" (9:11-12). Ananias did not respond by right away doing what God asks. Ananias had to put in his two cents. Ananias proceeds to tell God of the evil things Saul has done; about Saul's reputation as a persecutor of Christians, and Saul's mission to arrest followers of the Way of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem. (pause) The thing is God is God. God is all knowing. Do you think God already knew about all the wrongs Saul had been doing? (pause) Yeah. I think God already knew. Why do you think Ananias said all of that stuff about Saul? (pause) I think Ananias was trying to get out of doing what God was asking Ananias to do. I know that's what I was up to when I was a kid and I'd keep trying to put in my two cents to get out of doing my chores. I wonder. Do we do that today? Do we ever try to convince our boss why we do not need to do that task? (pause) Do we ever try to convince God of why we should not do what God tells us to do?

I think we do it all the time. God is forever calling out to us. God is always reaching out to us in love and grace, and we have a million excuses for why we should not repent, or turn back to God. Moses tried to argue he was a stammerer. Jonah tried to run away. Jeremiah tried to say he was too young, and Ananias tried to argue Saul had done too many things against Jesus Christ. (pause) Come to think of it Jonah tried to make the same argument about Nineveh. Today we make similar arguments. We say things like I am not good enough. I don't know enough about the Bible. I am not ready. I don't want to do things God's way – as if that was a valid excuse. My sisters and brothers, have we forgotten how we are supposed to respond when God calls? (pause) If you know how we are to respond to God's call say, Amen. **Amen.** If you are willing to respond by doing what God asks say Amen. **Amen!!** If we know how we are supposed to respond to God's call on our lives then why don't we?

Ananias finally does what God asks. Ananias finds Saul of Tarsus in the home of Judas on the street called Straight. Ananias gives credit to Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit finally responds to God's call in Ananias' life. Saul, on the other hand, does not try to argue with God. Saul does not hesitate. Once Saul has received his sight and recovered from his blindness and fasting Saul immediately proclaimed, "Jesus," saying, "He is the

Son of God.” The Biblical Author has given us a contrast between those who procrastinate and those who respond to God’s call immediately.

What is the result? (pause) What becomes of these two? Ananias is never mentioned again in Scripture. When Saul retells his conversion experience Saul does not mention Ananias. For better or worse this passage is the only place Ananias is mentioned. It is as if Ananias disappears from Scripture. With Saul it is a different story. When Saul proclaimed Jesus is the Son of God the people were amazed. They were amazed this man who had once been an enemy of the Church, persecuting disciples of the Way of Jesus Christ, was now working diligently to build up God’s church. That was an amazing thing. What is more amazing is what God does with Saul. The more people were amazed by Saul’s conversion and the power of Jesus Christ in Saul’s life, the more people believed in what Jesus could do in their lives. More and more people believed in the power of Jesus Christ to call, to save, to justify and to build them up so they could grow closer to God. More and more people accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, and Saul was strengthened for this purpose.

My brothers and sisters it is a fact of Christian life that disciples make disciples. Disciples don’t just talk about needing more people in the church. Disciples don’t just wish for more people in the church. Disciples don’t procrastinate by complaining about how many people are not in the church. Disciples do not make excuses for why they cannot go out and talk to people about Jesus Christ. Disciples make disciples. Disciples continually look for opportunities every moment of every day to reach one more for Jesus. Ananias tried to talk his way out of it. Saul responded immediately. Who was the more fruitful for God’s kingdom? (pause) Church, who was the more fruitful for God’s kingdom? (pause for a response) Saul was the more fruitful because Saul did not hesitate, he did not make excuses. Once Saul was clear about what God had called Saul to do he left his misunderstanding behind and worked hard to run the race that was put before him.

Sisters and brothers that was their response. What is our response? For the last several weeks we have been working our way through the book of Acts. I have kept asking the question, How will you respond? Please think back over the sermons you have heard. How has God called these people to be God’s hands and feet? How have they responded? What does a faithful response to God’s Holy Spirit look like? How should we respond? With Easter right around the corner it is a question we should seriously be asking ourselves. God is calling all the time. How will we respond?

In the name of Jesus Christ,
Amen.