

Investing for the Highest Return

Text: Acts 4:32-37 - *³² Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. ³³ And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵ and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. ³⁶ And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷ having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

Here is a firsthand account of life in the early, pre-denominational, first church. Life in the First Christian community looked like this:

- Great unity
- Great power
- Great grace
- Great generosity

Their generosity achieved something very special and rare:

V. 34 - *“nor was there anyone among them who lacked”*.

(Deuteronomy 15:4 - ... *“when there may be no poor among you; for the Lord will greatly bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess as an inheritance”*).

No one in our world today would make that kind of investment without the expectation of some tangible return. It just doesn't make sense to the natural mind. However, they were investing for the highest of returns:

Luke 12:33 - ... *“a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys”*

That is **maximum** return!

Among this multitude of early believers, a man stands out. He is known as Barnabas, and he also came to make his investment:

V.36-37 - *And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷ having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

Barnabas also brought money. However, Barnabas' greatest investment was probably not the shekels he brought that day but the investment of his own life, in the life of others. It is not a coincidence that his name, Barnabas, translated means *“son of encouragement”*.

The Bible speaks of James and John as “sons of thunder” (Mk3:17) but Barnabas is “son of encouragement”.

“**Son of encouragement**”, Paraklesis in the Greek, means ‘one called alongside to encourage, comfort or console’.

His identity was intertwined with his assignment. Joses (or Joseph) was his real name, and Barnabas was probably a nickname. The Apostles called him that. They must have seen in Joses the qualities of someone ready to invest his life in the lives of others.

1. Barnabas invested in Saul

Acts 9:26-28 - *And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷ But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. ²⁸ So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out.*

This was a high-risk investment. What if Saul was not a true disciple? After all, up to that point, Saul was only known as someone who persecuted the church and consented to the death of Stephen. He was an enemy of the church. No one had yet heard about his conversion to Jesus on the road to Damascus. However, Barnabas had faith in the power of God to change lives!

2. Barnabas invested in the inconvenient

Acts 11:20-26 - *²⁰ But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. ²² Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. ²³ When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. ²⁴ For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord. ²⁵ Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. ²⁶ And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*

When news reached Jerusalem that people were turning to Jesus in Antioch, they sent Barnabas there. This must have felt inconvenient for Barnabas: he had to leave the epicentre of a powerful move of God in Jerusalem, to go to Gentile territory.

Some investments at times may feel inconvenient, however, Barnabas was a good man:

V. 23 – *he encouraged them*

V. 24 AMPC – *“for he was a good man, good in himself and also at once for the good and advantage of other people.”*

Acts 14:21-22 AMPC - *When they had preached the good news (Gospel) to that town and made disciples of many of the people, they went back to Lystra and Iconium and Antioch, ²² Establishing and strengthening the souls and the hearts of the disciples, urging and warning and **encouraging them** to stand firm in the faith, and [telling them] that it is through many hardships and tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*

3. Barnabas invested in the failures

Acts 15:36-41 - *Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.” ³⁷ Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸ But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹ Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. ⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.*

To Paul, Mark was a write-off. However, Barnabas had more grace than Paul, and he believed in second chances. Where Paul saw failure, Barnabas saw potential. Barnabas believed in the God of second chances and in His power to change people.

Barnabas invested in Mark.

- This proved to be a great investment because God used Mark to write the Gospel that bears his name.
- In the later part of his life, Paul changed his mind about Mark:

2 Timothy 4:11 – *“Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry”*

People at times need to be encouraged in order to fulfill the assignment they were born for:

Deut. 1:38 – *“Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall go in there. Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.”*

Deut. 3:28 – *“But command Joshua, and encourage him and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you will see.”*

If even great leaders like Joshua needed encouragement to fulfill their assignment, how about the rest of us? Let us be a church that encourages one another:

Ephesians 4:29 – *“Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers”.*

1 Corinthians 14:26 – ...*“ Let all things be done for edification”*

1 Thessalonians 5:11 – *“Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you are also doing”*

Romans 14:19 – *“Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”*

Concluding words

The greatest investment we can make is to give our lives for the purposes of God. That is an investment with an assured maximum return! Equally, the investment of our lives into the lives of others will bring eternal returns.

Let us always be a people that values the right things and loves with radical love. Let us encourage one another and only speak words that build one another up. Let us never write anyone off and believe in the power of God to change lives. Everyone is important to God regardless of their failures, background, ethnicity or culture.

Let it be said, today, that there is a church in Rowville, Australia, where (like in Acts), there is

- Great unity
- Great power
- Great grace
- Great generosity