

Title: **"And They Arrested Them": The Risk of Love & the Mission of the Church**
Text: **Acts 4:1-13**
Date: **October 1, 2023**

Find the sermon manuscript to follow along with online at mercyhillchurch.org.



Big Idea

To love God and neighbor in the name of Jesus is to throw yourself open to all manner of risk and danger. When you open your heart, or your home, or your hand, or your mouth in love for God and others—you're going to get hurt, you're going to get rejected; it's not always going to be easy or comfortable . . . or safe. But it is the way that the kingdom of God advances in this world. And it's thrilling!

"Love God. Love neighbor. *Be safe (?)*." So far as I see it, you can't really do the first two if you're committed to doing this last one. To put it plainly: you can't love God, love neighbor, and keep yourself safe from all harm at the same time.

When we're so obsessed with minimizing risk that we shuffle our feet back from the edge of full-hearted obedience to Jesus—from showing and sharing the good news of the gospel with others, however it might mess up our lives as a result—we also inadvertently minimize our kingdom impact, our spiritual vitality, and our eternal reward. We choose to live within a little circle we can control rather than in the wild freedom of the children of God, swept up by him and set on the adventure of a lifetime.

1. In Our Text

Observation #1: They Take a Risk in Love

Observation #2: They Suffer Because of It

Observation #3: Jesus Gets Them through It

Observation #4: The Kingdom of God Advances

2. In History

"Atheism [by which he means 'Christianity—as a rejection of Roman gods] has been specially advanced through the loving service rendered to strangers, and through their care for the burial of the dead. It is a scandal that there is not a single Jew who is a beggar, and that the godless Galileans [i.e. 'Christians'] care not only for their own poor but for ours as well; while those who belong to us look in vain for the help that we should render them." - Roman Emperor Julian (332-363 AD)

3. In Jesus

When Christians risk, when they move towards, when they take on themselves the burdens of others, when they forego safety and lay down their lives in love, they are merely following in the way of their Master. If Jesus wanted to merely stay safe he would have never come to earth—he would have never left the glory he had with his Father and taken on flesh in the first place. The incarnation of Jesus didn't just make God human, it made him *killable*. It made him vulnerable. Now he could be touched and hugged, oh yes. But he could also be slapped or run through with a spear. To move towards us in love endangered his life. But he came anyways.

4. In Us?

I don't know if, lately, you've been cowering behind closed doors, dead-bolted up and down the side. I don't know if you've been governed more by fear or by freedom, by self-concern or by self-sacrificial love. But I think know what Jesus would say to all of us this morning, wherever we are: "Love God. Love neighbor. *Take risks!*"



Reflection Questions

- What was your initial reaction to the words on the sign out in front of that Lutheran church? Did you see a contradiction there? Do you see one now? How do you deal with the tension we often feel between loving God and neighbor and staying safe? Can all three coexist? Explain.
- What's one way you might risk in love for God and neighbor this week? Why does this feel scary? How can Jesus and the church help?

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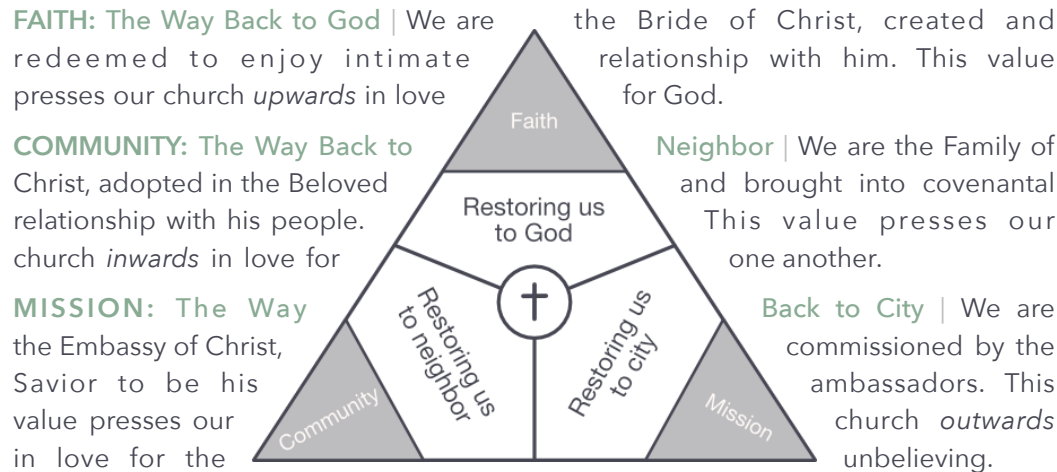


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Our Mission & Values

Mercy Hill Church exists to help restore us to God, neighbor, and city through the good news of Jesus Christ.



Your Next Steps

When approaching the Christian faith and life, it can be confusing to know where to even begin. Come find us at the Next Steps Table after the service—it would be our joy to help you along in the journey! And if you're a visitor, we have a special gift bag for you. Don't miss it!



Mail: PO Box 23806, San Jose, CA 95153
Phone: (408) 320-7080
Email: info@mercyhillchurch.org
Web: mercyhillchurch.org



Welcome to Mercy Hill Church.
We are so glad you've joined us today!

Announcement Spotlight

All Church Hangout - Today!!!

Meaningful community is hard to find in Silicon Valley, even in the church. Our congregation is spread out all over the city. But there is one day of every week when we all commit to gather together and worship our God: Sunday. It seems strategic to take this pre-existing momentum and work with it in an attempt to develop deeper community within our body. Therefore, on occasional Sundays throughout the year we will invite the church to enjoy picnic-style afternoons together immediately following the service.

The Plan: After service, bring or buy your lunch and join us at the tables out back for a picnic-style afternoon.

Want to Get Baptized?!

Baptism is "going public" with your faith in Jesus. It's a declaration to the world that you are not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16)—even to you! It's being immersed into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). It's being brought into the very fellowship of the Trinity and family of God. It's a sign and seal of your participation in Christ. It's going down with him in his death and rising up with him in his resurrection life (Rom. 6:3-4). It's passing through the judgment waters of God by way of Jesus our Ark (1 Pet. 3:20-21). It's a picture of your new creation in him (2 Cor. 5:17). It's a big decision. And one certainly worth considering.

A few at Mercy Hill have recently expressed interest in being baptized. If you (and/or your children) are interested as well, please let us know!

Please scan the QR code below to find a link to sign up.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at info@mercyhillchurch.org.

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