

Pastor Writes

Greetings to all! We are now in the fifth Sunday after Pentecost and we have been looking at the authority of Christ over the last three weeks. We looked at the authority of Christ the Lord to teach as nobody else did that everybody was listening to him. He delivered the man with an evil Spirit and gave him true freedom. This was followed by the authority of Jesus to forgive sin and heal sickness. Last week we looked at the Spiritual freedom we had in Christ and this week we look at 'The authority of Christ's messengers is based on their living contact with him.'

The context is that Jesus had healed a man with the shrivelled hand on the Sabbath and the people were angry with him for working on the Sabbath. The Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how to kill Jesus. Jesus then withdraws to the lake. The crowd that follows him is made up of quite a mixture of people. Some are following because they have desperate need of healing. Others are following Jesus to see the miraculous things that Jesus is doing and they want to be spectators of this event. Then there are those who are going to be followers of Jesus who would have to learn what it means to be with him. The crowds were coming from near and far. Judea and Jerusalem are the parts that his ministry extends to. People have heard about Jesus working in Galilee and people from the South are flocking to him. People from the regions across the Jordan and also further North from Tyre and Sidon are coming to Jesus. The crowd was increasing he asks the people to have small boat ready for him because the people were crowding him. Jesus had healed many that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. They thought to themselves that if they only managed to touch him they would be healed. This was also the belief of the woman who was suffering with bleeding for twelve years and the moment she touched Jesus she was healed. So the crowds were likewise trying to touch Jesus.

Whenever evil spirits saw him they recognized Jesus immediately and they fell down before him and cried out 'You are the Son of God'. The evil spirits knew who Jesus was and they knew that they had to go when Jesus had confronted them. However, they tried to disclose Jesus' identity at a time when Jesus himself was not interested in disclosing himself so that his ministry would not be hindered. In the presence of Jesus demons will have to flee. Jesus commanded them to keep quiet as they left the people who were possessed. The challenge for us this morning is to ask ourselves as what motivates our discipleship. Are we spectators? Or are we looking for healing? Or are we opposed to his teachings? Or do we want to be genuine disciples?

In the second part of the gospel reading we see Jesus choosing his disciples. Luke tells us that Jesus went and prayed the whole night before choosing his disciples (Lk 6:12). Prayer is communication with the Father and Jesus does that all the time. When he chose his disciples or whatever he did, he was always in communion with the Father. This is vital for the disciples of Jesus. If Jesus himself was in touch with the Father through prayer then his followers would also need to do that.

Jesus then calls the twelve – those whom he wanted and they came to him. The disciples were obedient to the call. They responded to Jesus' call to be his disciples. They were to carry on the mission that he had entrusted to them. What was this mission? The Purpose of the call was three fold: To be with Him; To preach; and to have authority over demons

The first and foremost thing was that the disciples would be with Jesus. The authority of Christ's messengers comes in their living contact with him. We can only draw power and strength from him if we are rooted and grounded in Christ. We are called to abide in Christ. Jesus says if you abide in me and I in you then ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you (Jn 15:7). We need to practise the presence of God in our lives. Only when we do that can we be his messengers. Secondly, the disciples were called to preach the gospel. This is also the primary purpose of discipleship. Just as the disciples went around boldly preaching the message of the forgiveness of sins through Jesus, so also we are called to preach the good news by verbal witness and witness through service.

Thirdly the disciples were to have authority over demons. They were to drive out demons and set people free from the bondage of Satan. The twelve were appointed because God carries out his work through human messengers. Their companionship with him was to lead them into service for others. They were not to be merely on the receiving end of the outbreak of God's power through the presence of the Holy Spirit but they were to share it with others. May we who have tasted God's grace draw our authority from our living contact with Christ.

Shalom

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