

Greetings to you! The theme for this morning's meditation is that, 'The Authority of Christ's messengers is based on their living contact with him.' In the passage that was read to us from Mark's gospel we see that Jesus is continuing his ministry of preaching, healing and driving out demons. Crowds were pressing in on him to touch him in order that they may be healed. After this Jesus withdrew and went up on a mountainside and called to him those whom he wanted. Jesus himself took time to pray before he called those whom he wanted. Jesus had called the twelve to be with him, that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.

The first and foremost thing that Mark records for us is that the apostles were called to be 'with him'. This was something they did for over three years. They stayed with him and learnt from him as he was preparing them for the ministry that they had to undertake once he would die, resurrect and then be taken up back to the Father. He had much to teach them during the course of this time. He taught them that they had to be in communion with him and the Father if at all they were to be his messengers. They were not going to be professionals that once they had received the training they would be on their own, doing all the things that they had to do. It was in being with him that they would have the power to carry out the ministry that they were going to be entrusted with.

Secondly, they were to go around and preach the gospel. They were to go to all the places and testify about Jesus from Jerusalem to Judea and then to the utmost parts of the earth. We know that the apostles after the day of Pentecost received power and were able to go around and preach the gospel to the utmost parts of the earth. Thomas who refused to believe in the resurrection of Jesus came all the way to our country and shared the gospel with the people of our land though he was martyred in the end. The good news of the gospel is that Christ has come in order to save us from our sins and offer us the gift of eternal life. He has taken the punishment of our sins on the cross and therefore is in a position to offer us this free gift.. We are called to receive this gift by faith.

The third reason that Jesus called the apostles was that they would drive out demons. During his earthly ministry Jesus delivered many who were possessed by the evil one. He had called the apostles to carry on with that ministry. However, the apostles also knew that the authority of the messenger was based on their living contact with Jesus. It was only by the power of Jesus given to them through the indwelling Holy Spirit that they were able to drive out demons. Their living and intimate communion with him allowed them to exercise authority and drive out demons.

The challenge for all of us this morning is also threefold. We as the followers of Christ are called to be with him. We are called to spend time with him as we pray and read his word. We are to be in an intimate communion with him. Only when this relationship is established can we go out as his messengers and share the good news and exercise authority over the powers of darkness.. We have to be filled with God's Holy Spirit in order to carry out this ministry. We are to practice the presence of God in our lives so that we will be able to exercise this ministry. We are the branches and he is the vine. We are called to abide in the vine that we may indeed bear fruit.. May we truly have a living contact with him in our daily lives and be his faithful messengers who act in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Shalom

Paul Swarup

1st July 2012