



Luke 9:1–6

9 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, 2 and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal those who were ill. 3 He told them: ‘Take nothing for the journey – no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. 4 Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. 5 If people do not welcome you, leave

their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.’ 6 So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

Reflection

(Today’s reflection is given by Craig Tubman)

Today we read of Jesus enlarging his kingdom mission through the work of his 12 disciples. Already we have read of Jesus’ teaching, healing, even raising the dead and he is doing so under the banner of what the shape and nature of God’s eternal kingdom will be like. That is, in the king of God’s kingdom – Jesus – we see glimpses

of God's promised new creation – a relationship with God as our heavenly father, no sickness, no disease and no shadow of death. Like light breaking through the clouds, Jesus is giving glimpses of God's eternal Kingdom in our dark world and extending invitations into it.

Now in Chapter 9 Luke tells us Jesus gathers the 12 together and

‘gives them power and authority to drive out all demons and cure diseases’.

It's fair to say at this point that Christians take differing views upon the implication of this and similar texts. Some will read this as normative for the Christian experience. That is, it's not just the 12 disciples

but anyone who follows Jesus who will have this same ministry of healing, casting out demons and raising the dead. There are others who understand this ministry as a specific ministry that was given to the 12 disciples in order to kick start Jesus mission, declaring the Son of God has arrived. Personally I have been convinced of the second interpretation. While I believe God is capable of and does do miraculous things I do not believe we should expect as Christians to be able to heal every disease and raise the dead. In some circles, Christian leaders have unhelpfully manipulated people by telling them that they too can have the power of the disciples if only their faith was stronger. This teaching can be very unhelpful. In some cases God will answer our prayer for healing with healing. At other times he won't

answer it with healing. In both cases he is at work in our lives and our world leading us closer to him and shaping us more like his son Jesus.

Nonetheless, here in chapter 9 Jesus gives his 12 disciples power to do what he has been doing – showing the in-breaking of God's marvellous kingdom into our world. Three interesting things to note. Firstly, anything miraculous is to be accompanied by a proclamation of the kingdom of God. That is, anything miraculous must be interpreted through the lens of Jesus at work in this world and the need for those who hear to repent and believe.

Secondly, the disciples are instructed to pack light. This tells us that the mission Jesus has sent them on is time limited.

There is urgency and they are to seek the hospitality of those whom they meet.

Thirdly, we see that to reject the message of Jesus given through his followers is to reject Jesus himself. The disciples are not told to force their message upon anyone. Instead they are to lovingly proclaim the Gospel message, whilst seeking the good of those they share it with. If it is rejected they are to move on.

Whilst it is debated as to what 'power' you and I have as Christians today to heal and do the miraculous, one thing is agreed upon – Jesus continues to work through his people to bring the good news of his kingdom into the world. Each one of us find ourselves surrounded by men and woman created by God, loved by God but

distant from him. To bear witness to our Lord Jesus, to extend invitations and to pray for God to be at work is our role as his people. We are not called to force our faith upon anyone, but nor are we called to be silent. Instead, as the apostle Peter wrote to Christians in the early church:

‘Always be prepared to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.’

Think & Pray

I wonder who it is that God has placed in your orbit to be a witness to him? I wonder who may benefit from receiving an invitation? An invitation to be prayed for? An invitation to church? An invitation to read

the Bible? I wonder who it is that you could pray for? Asking God to be at work in their lives, perhaps even through you.

Why not take some time today to pray with God about these things. Consider who you are bearing witness to and whom you may extend an invitation. Why not ask God to give you the courage to share his kingdom work with those he has placed around you.