

Article of the Month – June 2013

Missionary Aspects in the Gospel – Mark (1)

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There is a remarkable ‘anti-missions aspect’ in Mark – although not exclusively in this Gospel, namely Jesus’ desire to ‘not tell anyone’.¹ His desire to rid the ministry of sensationalism and wrong crowds² was not meant to keep a person from glorifying God. His desire to not tell anyone was pragmatic.

Prayer accompanied the strategy Jesus chose for His ministry.³ *This* prayer is placed between the passages where He called His disciples. Knowing how exactly

Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit and how strong His communion with the Father was, we can safely assume that He made no mistakes, also not in choosing a disciple like Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Him. This very act strongly denies the erratic teaching of pre-destination unto damnation. Judas received a three-year window of grace, in which he could have repented of his sins – but did not.

A little farther we see three parables, comparing the Kingdom of God to sowing and seed, implying that Jesus speaks about production and growth.⁴ Later we learn from the fig tree⁵ that not bearing fruit means a curse because it is against the nature of the Kingdom.

It almost sounds superfluous when Jesus says that He came to save sinners, not the righteous,⁶ but how often today does our ‘church-growth’ turn out to be ‘sheep-stealing’ rather than saving new souls into the Kingdom?

When we see that Jesus chose some of His disciples to become apostles – sent ones, or missionaries – He took *those He wanted*.⁷ Becoming a missionary therefore is God’s initiative rather than ours – which is no excuse to remain passive.⁸

Mark spends only a few verses on the first short-term outreach of the apostles.⁹ Matthew describes this topic more elaborately.¹⁰

¹ See e.g. 1:44; 5:43; 7:36; 8:26,30 and 9:9

² 8:11,12; Matt. 12:38,39

³ Mark 1:35-39

⁴ Chapter 4

⁵ 11:12-14,20,21

⁶ 2:17

⁷ 3:13

⁸ E.g. as in Matt. 25:24-30, where the lazy slave hid his talent in the ground

⁹ Mark 6:6b-13

¹⁰ See my article of February 2013

After outreaches, whether short-term or long-term, opportunities should be created for debriefing and rest.¹¹ For mutual encouragement of senders as well as sent ones, the stories of the latter should be heard.

Missions is not an office-hours-job. Sometimes it takes precedence over privacy,¹² as I explained earlier.¹³

We see a balance in Jesus' ministry: He preached in villages, towns and the countryside.¹⁴ There was equal attention in His ministry for urban and rural outreach.

We may wonder why missionaries who gave up things for the Lord and the Gospel are often seen as poor. After all, the Lord promises rewards, not only in the age to come (eternal life), but *also in the present, even a hundred times as much.*¹⁵ Do we honor the Lord with an attitude of poverty? Or did we not really give up that much for Him?

An attitude of servanthood is the criterion for greatness in the Kingdom.¹⁶ In spite of that, it is often difficult for its executives to look to the unseen reward in the future and some fall into the trap of pursuing greatness in the visible realm.¹⁷

Jesus states that the Temple was meant to be a house of prayer for all nations.¹⁸ Are our churches houses of prayer for all nations? Are they houses of prayer at all?

Jesus tells the Jews to pay taxes to Caesar because this ruler's image is found on the coin.¹⁹ By telling them to give to God what is God's He implies that we should give ourselves to Him, since He stamped His image on us.²⁰ We are not our own, nor are we authorized to choose what to do with our lives. We are to walk in His plans.²¹

¹¹ Mark 6:30-32

¹² 6:33,34

¹³ Van 't Slot, *World Evangelisation – That All May Hear*, 6th Edition, 2012:63,64, Recruiting for Missions, Ede, The Netherlands

¹⁴ Mark 6:56

¹⁵ 10:28-30

¹⁶ 10:42-45

¹⁷ 10:35-41

¹⁸ 11:17; Is. 56:7

¹⁹ Mark 12:13-17

²⁰ Gen. 1:26,28; 5:1b

²¹ Eph. 2:10

