

Article of the Month – November 2013

Missionary Aspects in the Gospel – Luke (1)

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An important aspect in Luke's Gospel is Jesus' encounters with Gentiles, among others with people from Tyre and Sidon,¹ a believing Roman centurion² and a Gadarene demoniac whom He delivered and sent back to his village to tell what He had done for him.³ After a difference of opinion with some Samaritans⁴ Jesus states that we have no right of revenge against 'stubborn nationals' who refuse us their cooperation. The nature of the Jesus' message is salvation, not destruction. It was not the time for

God's day of vengeance, a clause Jesus left out when He quoted Isaiah.⁵ Now is the era of grace. Another encounter with a Samaritan led to his healing.⁶

We distinguish a number of sending principles in the Gospel. It all begins with prayer. Jesus prayed before He chose His disciples⁷ and before He decided what outreach strategy He would follow.⁸

Later we get a rare glimpse into Jesus' support team.⁹ Such a group is a necessity for any missionary to have, and often consists of those who have been blessed by his or her ministry. In Matthew we looked at the first short-term outreach of the apostles; Luke gives us a shorter version of it.¹⁰

Jesus has an interesting way to test the motives of new missionaries.¹¹ There are three categories. To the *first* He says 'foxes have holes...' in other words: are you prepared to leave your comfort zone? Following and working for Me will cost you! To the *second* He says 'let the dead bury their dead' which is an encouragement to set your priorities straight before you can enter the ministry. To the *third* He comments on 'looking back', meaning: are you really willing to leave your old life behind?

In Luke – as in contrast to Matthew – we see a second short-term outreach. Now 72 people were sent out.¹² Jesus instills in His apostles the need for more workers. After their first

¹ Luke 6:17

² 7:1-10

³ 8:26-39

⁴ 9:51-56

⁵ 4:18,19; Is. 61:2b

⁶ Luke 17:11-19

⁷ 4:42a, preparing for 5:1-11

⁸ 4:42a, preparing for 4:43,44; see also 5:16 & 6:12-16

⁹ 8:2,3

¹⁰ 9:1-9

¹¹ 9:57-62

¹² 10:1-18 there may have been 70, in accordance with the first list of people groups in Gen. 10

outreach¹³ they understood how much work remained to be done. Jesus' solution is: sending more workers and telling His disciples to pray for still more.¹⁴ We see again the non-settlement principle of short-term outreach: 'do not take and do not greet'.¹⁵

The man of peace is the one most inclined to receive the Prince of Peace and His messengers.¹⁶ The missionary locates and blesses this person and after he accepts the Gospel he becomes the beachhead in the area. If not even one man can be found in this region, the curse – already over that place for rejecting the Lord – must be confirmed by the workers shaking the dust off their feet.¹⁷

Knowledge leads to responsibility.¹⁸ If the Gospel is rejected, the consequences are more severe than for the Gentiles of Sodom, Tyre and Sidon who did not hear. In this context Jesus also mentioned Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and Jonah preaching in Nineveh.¹⁹

The passage about Satan falling from heaven²⁰ reminds us of Joshua, telling his officers to put their feet on the necks of five subjugated kings.²¹ Jesus refers to His victory at Calvary, where He would expose and then triumph over His enemies.²² With this, He indicates the aspect of spiritual warfare in missions.

Very important is the missionary's integrity, as in contrast with the hypocrisy Jesus fights in the Pharisees and Law-scholars. Christian character cannot be over-emphasized. When Jesus speaks about the lamp of the body, He indicates that the light of the Gospel can only shine through us, when we shed the darkness in our body, i.e. our heart and thinking.²³ Our eyes must look into the right direction so that our feet will walk the right path.²⁴ Without that light any Gospel witness is neutralized. Admitting darkness into your life in secret will dim its radiance in public.

Later He says 'you clean only the outside of the cup'.²⁵ He contrasts the polished outside to the wicked inside. Jesus mentions an attitude of giving to the poor as an antidote for greed. These are deep, non-negotiable principles and decisive factors as to whether believers will become true disciples or not. The rest of the passage²⁶ shows that a believer who lacks integrity is a hypocrite and no better than a Pharisee. Hypocrites wear masks because they have things to hide. Honest people have nothing to hide: they can show outside *and* inside without being ashamed. There is no point in hypocrisy: everything will be disclosed and revealed in the end.²⁷

¹³ 9:1-6

¹⁴ 10:1,2

¹⁵ 10:4-11; we would say: 'forget about your comfort' and 'don't procrastinate, don't be distracted'

¹⁶ 10:6,16; Is. 6:9

¹⁷ Luke 10:10-15

¹⁸ 10:13-15

¹⁹ 11:29-32

²⁰ 10:18

²¹ Josh. 10:24

²² Col. 2:15

²³ Luke 11:33-36

²⁴ Prov. 4:23-27

²⁵ Luke 11:37-41

²⁶ 11:42-54

²⁷ 12:1-3

