

Article of the Month – December 2013

Missionary Aspects in the Gospels – Luke (2)

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There are some more topics in this gospel that are worth pondering in a missionary context. When people are not inclined to listen to God's messengers, they will not listen when He speaks to them directly either;¹ neither will miracles change them.² Missionaries can be discouraged when people reject the Gospel, but must realize that their audiences in fact reject Jesus Who sent them. Faith is based on free moral choice, not on extraordinary circumstances, although these *may* be part of a

Gospel presentation.³

Our new spiritual identity – our names are written in heaven⁴ – is more important than our work for the Lord (demons submitting to us). We see the same principle in the story of Martha and Mary:⁵ our relationship with the Lord is of greater importance than our work for Him.

The story of the good Samaritan⁶ shows how two sent ones, the priest and the Levite, failed in their calling and how a Gentile – a Samaritan and not even a minister – had compassion for somebody who was severely injured. In Kingdom service we should *unlearn* to say 'this is not my ministry', or 'I have more important things to do'.

Jesus says that when we as missionaries and relief workers enter areas that are hit by disaster, we should not assume that people there are worse sinners than those in our own countries.⁷ Disasters that strike the Developing World are often seen by workers as directly related to sins of complacency and immorality which cause AIDS; poverty related to greed and corruption of political leaders; economic malaise following theft and incompetence, etc. Christ calls all to repentance.

The parable of the unproductive fig tree⁸ suggests that there is a time limit for fruit to appear. There is no use therefore to continue work in barren areas when all has been done, because a ministry must yield fruit within a certain time. We must be critical in evaluating our endeavors. The *growth and production principle* belongs to the Kingdom's DNA, violation of which will not be tolerated;⁹ the same is seen in the parable about the minas.¹⁰

¹ Luke 7:29,30; 10:16

² 16:27-31

³ Mark 16:17,18

⁴ Luke 10:18-20

⁵ 10:38-42

⁶ 10:25-37

⁷ 13:1-5

⁸ 13:6-9

⁹ 8:5-15; 13:7b,9b,19,21

‘Oh Jerusalem’, Jesus cried out.¹¹ Although He was rejected, He cried out for the city in compassion. Can we weep like Jesus did¹² over resistant cities, in spite of rejection?

An interesting detail we find in the parable of the great banquet.¹³ You may be discouraged because as sent one, you lack results and after your pleas, people still do not come to Christ. You are in good company. Your Lord is even angry about it – though not with you. He shares your disappointment and will eventually make your ministry successful.¹⁴

The cost of being a disciple comes close to that of being a missionary. Both examples – building and waging war – are missionary in nature.¹⁵

One of the King’s characteristics is to seek the lost.¹⁶ There is seeking, finding and joy after finding the sheep and the coin. These are only things. Losing a son, in the third parable, goes much deeper. The father grieved about the loss, the older brother did not. Do we care about the lost? Or do we have the attitude of a mercenary (‘slaving’, ‘orders’)¹⁷ like the older son, instead of a compassionate, missionary heart?

We learn from the dishonest manager¹⁸ that God’s managers are *stewards* of His goods, *not owners*, as many think. We have to invest His riches into people’s salvation (‘welcomed in eternal dwellings’). This brings the Master’s recommendation.

The rich man was not lost because he was rich but because he did not care about his fellow-man.¹⁹ The story is similar to that of the shrewd manager. Affluence does not cause God’s judgment but the way in which it is used – either for eternal or temporary purposes; for others or for self is what makes the eternal difference. Senders and sent-ones look out for others and their salvation. The rest of the population concentrates on self, and in ‘finding their lives’ lose it.²⁰

Are missionaries advised to be physically armed?²¹ Although it looks like it, the context together with other Gospels shows us otherwise. Jesus stops Peter’s forceful action²² and gives His reasons.²³ Later, no apostle ever used weapons. The only legitimate sword in the New Testament is the Word of God. Our struggle is *not* against flesh and blood.²⁴

¹⁰ 19:12-23

¹¹ 13:31-35

¹² 19:41

¹³ 14:16-24

¹⁴ 14:21-23

¹⁵ 14:25-35, especially vs. 28-32

¹⁶ Chapter 15

¹⁷ 15:29

¹⁸ 16:1-15

¹⁹ 16:19-31

²⁰ Matt. 10:39

²¹ Luke 22:35-38

²² 22:49-51

²³ Matt. 26:52; John 18:11

²⁴ Eph. 6:12,17; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 1:16; 19:15,21

