

## The Next Stage In Ministry

Our Lord Jesus Christ taught His disciples by word and example. By word when He explained to them privately the meaning of the parables, first giving them 'ears to hear' and then telling them 'to you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God', and also by example when He healed the sick, raised the dead and performed miracles before them.

The parables of Mark chapter four taught the disciples the sovereign nature and certain success of the gospel of grace, the miracles of Mark 5 showed that grace in action.

### **The parable of the sower**

The parable of the sower showed that while the gospel would be efficacious to save, it would be received by such only as are enabled to receive it, those prepared by the Holy Spirit as good ground to receive good seed. Other mixed responses of rejection were also to be expected by these seedsmen-preachers.

### **The parable of the candlestick**

The parable of the light on the candlestick showed the disciples that Christ's message for the gathering of His kingdom was to be widely shared, freely declared, yet jealously guarded from alteration and variation. The disciple-apostles would have one job and one job only, to declare the Gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation by Him.

### **The seed growing**

The parable of the secret nature of the seed growing showed how having faithfully preached the gospel the apostles' role in the matter was finished. Not only was the soil preparation the Spirit's work, so too, the rooting of the seed, the growth of the shoot, and the bearing of spiritual fruit. Salvation is not man's work in any way, salvation is of the Lord!

### **The mustard seed**

The parable of the mustard seed nevertheless assured the disciples of success. Indeed, growth would be out of proportion to their efforts because this was the Lord's marvellous work.

### **All things expounded**

The Saviour 'expounded all things to his disciples' while they were alone, teaching them about the gospel and their ministry. But like all good teachers the Lord did not merely tell His disciples, He taught by example as well. Before the Saviour sent out His disciples to preach the gospel of repentance and faith He demonstrated by the miracles He allowed them to witness both what their work would entail, and what it would achieve. Think of these miracles, at least in part, as case studies for the disciples and future generations of preachers.

### **Calming the storm**

He stilled the wind and calmed the sea, showing His power over the elements of nature while preserving the disciples' lives when death was imminent. Spiritual life would save the souls of men and women just as surely. Despite being contrary to the gospel and violently opposed to free grace, fallen nature can no more resist God's power and authority in the Gospel than it can the voice of Christ in a storm.

### **The Gadarene demoniac**

The Gadarene Demoniac was a demonstration of grace and power of the highest order. The Lord sought out this poor lost soul amongst the tombs of a far country. Christ found him demented, destructive, and pitiful to behold but left him sane, safe and peaceful. Surely, a more wonderful example of powerful, sovereign grace could not have been displayed to the Lord's wondering students. But there was more.

### **An issue of blood**

The woman with an issue of blood, secretly and silently healed amongst a jostling crowd by the divine power of Jesus Christ, together with her subsequent public witness upon realising her wholeness, is in one simple encounter a beautiful lesson in regeneration and conversion.

## **Jairus' daughter**

Jairus' daughter's resurrection showed in picture what the gospel does for every child of God to whom the Saviour comes with healing hand and quickening voice. All these are object lessons of sublime glory to students of the Master waiting to be commissioned and sent out on their own.

## **Training for service**

This great commission, the sending forth of the apostles, was part of the Lord's own ministry. In the coming months He would be taken, crucified, arise from the dead and ascend to heaven, but the work of the gospel, of gathering in the elect would continue apace. By word and deed the Lord was preparing His disciples to be His apostles but their training was practical, too.

As the Lord prepared to send out His disciples He reminded them to expect rejection and opposition. He did so by allowing them to witness His own personal rejection in His home town of Nazareth. Such open denial by family and erstwhile friends and neighbours meant the disciples could not predict where they would get a hearing, but even then, 'a few sick folk' would gladly receive their ministry.

## **The next step**

Now, having heard the Lord's teaching, seen His miracles and watched His example it is time for the disciples to put into practice what they have learned. It is here we find ourselves for the coming Lord's day service. As the disciples enter upon this stage of preparation for apostolic ministry the Lord Jesus empowers, instructs and oversees their success.

Our hymns for today are below.

## Hymn 1

5

### **The Wisdom of God. 1 Cor. 1. 24; Eph. 3. 9-11**

*I. Watts*

*C.M.*

**1**

The Lord, descending from above,  
Invites his children near,  
While power, and truth, and boundless love  
Display their glories here.

**2**

Here, in thy gospel's wondrous frame,  
Fresh wisdom we pursue;  
A thousand angels learn thy name,  
Beyond whate'er they knew.

**3**

Thy name is writ in fairest lines;  
Thy wonders here we trace;  
Wisdom through all the mystery shines,  
And shines in Jesus' face.

4

The law its best obedience owes  
To our incarnate God;  
And thy revenging justice shows  
Its honours in his blood.

5

But still the lustre of thy grace  
Our warmer thoughts employs;  
Gilds the whole scene with brighter rays,  
And more exalts our joys.

Hymn 2

47

**The Law and Gospel. Gal. 3. 10; Luke 23. 34; 1 Cor. 1. 18**

*I. Watts*

*L.M.*

1

[Cursed be the man, for ever cursed,  
That does one wilful sin commit;  
Death and damnation for the first,  
Without relief and infinite.

2

Thus Sinai roars, and round the earth  
Thunder, and fire, and vengeance flings;  
But Jesus, thy dear gasping breath  
And Calvary, say gentler things:

3

“Pardon and grace, and boundless love,  
Streaming along a Saviour’s blood;  
And life, and joy, and crowns above,  
Obtained by a dear bleeding God.”

4

Hark! how he prays, (the charming sound  
Dwells on his dying lips,) “Forgive!”  
And every groan and gaping wound  
Cries, “Father, let the rebels live!”]

5

Go, ye that rest upon the law,  
And toil and seek salvation there,  
Look to the flame that Moses saw,  
And shrink, and tremble, and despair.

6

But I’ll retire beneath the cross;  
Saviour, at thy dear feet I’ll lie!  
And the keen sword that justice draws,  
Flaming and red, shall pass me by.