

Background for Week 8

The last five weeks we've been looking at the teachings of Jesus. Now we'll move into studying his miracles. To begin, we go back a few chapters in Luke's gospel where we delve into his commissioning of the disciples and the story of the feeding of the five thousand, with a brief interlude by Herod.

You'll notice that the Holy Spirit has had a prime role in initiating events, particularly of course Jesus' birth and anointing him for ministry. It is this same power that is conferred on the apostles, and then of course all Christians throughout time and space when we are baptized. It is in essence an extension of our Redeemer's ministry.

As is a trademark of Luke, we come across a compassionate Savior living and working among the people. He does not separate himself, but rather becomes immersed in their lives. It is the holy meeting the imperfect, the extraordinary meeting the ordinary, just as happens in baptism and communion where we experience the Eternal Word in everyday elements: water, wine, bread.

Text for this week: Luke 9:1-17. (*We encourage you to post your answers to these questions on our 100 Key Texts Facebook Page and engage in a discussion with the others.*)

1. Read 9:1-17 in its entirety. What jumps out at you in the text? What thoughts are inspired by it? What questions arise?
2. Next, we'll break it down by verse(s). Read 9:1-6.
 - Vs 1: Demons were real entities to the people of that time. Whereas today, when many people refer to them, the term is being used in the metaphorical sense. In either case, it speaks of those oppositional forces or powers in this world. What are some of your demons?
 - Vs. 2: What does it mean to proclaim the kingdom of God? What does it mean to heal? Is there a difference between curing and healing? And if so, what is it?
 - Vs. 3: Put yourselves in the disciples shoes for a moment and imagine you're going on a mission trip, say to Tanzania or Colombia. You're handed a to-pack list, but it's blank. How would it be to take nothing with you, but instead to rely wholly on God for everything?
 - Vs. 4-5: This, one could, say was an early form of evangelism. What does this tell us about evangelism? How is it perceived today? As Lutherans, we tend not to be so bold as to knock on doors and share the good news, let alone ask if we can stay there! How can we in the Lutheran church though still carry out the ministry of evangelism? For those with no church background, which is a growing number of people, "the good news" is a foreign phrase. How would you explain it to them? As the Oxford Annotated Bible comments, "the act of shaking off dust was a graphic demonstration of renunciation of further responsibility for those who did not welcome the twelve." Today's world is different. Christianity is of course much more widespread. Have there been times you haven't been welcomed because you're a follower

of Christ?

3. 7-9. Such was Jesus' work and life that even Herod was curious. How are we drawing people to Christ as individuals? As a church? How are we not doing this?
4. 10-11: At the beginning of our text, the disciples were empowered and sent out to do ministry. Now they've returned after some time to the same source where they were first nourished. What does this tell us about our own lives as disciples? Who do you tell about your ministry? We often hear and use the phrase, "kingdom of God." How do you feel about language such as "kingdom?"
5. 12-17: This is the one story that occurs in all four gospels.
 - Which character(s) are you relating to as you read this section and why?
 - It's been a long day of work and is now supper time. The disciples are likely tired and hungry, as is the crowd, and probably Jesus too. He is after all, not just fully divine, but also fully human. What connections, if any, do you see with the rest of the text, especially the beginning?
 - We refer to this event as one of Jesus' miracles. What is, or are, the miracle(s) in this text? What exactly is a miracle? Do we still experience them today? How are they different or the same as this sort of miracle?
 - Vs. 13: The disciples and Jesus are operating out of two different lenses or perspectives. What are they? What does this have to say about our personal stewardship? About our collective stewardship?
 - Vs. 16: Many of the stories we read and hear in Luke's gospel anticipate later events in the overall story of Christ. What does this particular one foreshadow? What might this have to say about the body of Christ?
 - What are the ways Jesus has fed you today? How have you given those around you "something to eat?"

For your prayers:

Dear Provider, you feed and commission us. Spark within us curiosity and generosity. Give us courage to wholly rely on you alone. And help us to see and live as your Son did. Amen.

Next week: Matthew 14:22-36