

8. Comrades in Arms (1Q 2016—Rebellion and Redemption)

Biblical material: Luke 5:6–8, 11; 24:32; Mark 3:14; Matt. 8:23–27; Mark 4:35–41; 9:33–37; Matt. 20:20–28.

Quotes

- God uses people. God uses people to perform His work. He does not send angels. Angels weep over it, but God does not use angels to accomplish His purposes. He uses burdened broken-hearted weeping men and women. *David Wilkerson*
- There are no shortcuts to maturity in discipleship; it was, is, and always will be learned over time and under pressure walking in union with Christ. *R. Alan Woods*
- The true teacher defends his pupils against his own personal influence. He inspires self-distrust. He guides their eyes from himself to the spirit that quickens him. He will have no disciple. *Amos Bronson Alcott*
- Jesus does not call us to do what he did, but to be as he was, permeated with love. Then the doing of what he did and said becomes the natural expression of who we are in him. *Dallas Willard*
- So many people come to church with a genuine desire to hear what we have to say, yet they are always going back home with the uncomfortable feeling that we are making it too difficult for them to come to Jesus. *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*
- Individually the disciple and friend of Jesus who has learned to work shoulder to shoulder with his or her Lord stands in this world as a point of contact between heaven and earth, a kind of Jacob's ladder by which the angels of God may ascend from and descend into human life. Thus the disciple stands as an envoy or a receiver by which the kingdom of God is conveyed into every quarter of human affairs. *Dallas Willard*

Questions

What is so significant in Jesus wanting to share his ministry with others? How did the disciples help/hinder what Jesus did? How does this aspect fit into the wider scheme of the great controversy? What is God trying to tell us here? How are we also part of God's answer before the on-looking universe?

Bible summary

The calling of Jesus' first disciples by the Sea of Galilee is recorded in Luke 5. Even so, they did not understand much of Jesus' ministry until later (e.g. Luke 24:32). He appointed twelve according to Mark 3:14. They were amazed by his calming of the storm (Matt. 8:23–27; Mark 4:35–41). The first shall be last, and they must be like little children, says Jesus (Mark 9:33–37). Even so, the mother of James and John came to ask for a special position for her sons (Matt. 20:20–28).

Comment

Jesus did not come to work alone. As he began his ministry he called others to go with him, to learn and to share in the experience. As Jesus revealed God to the world, his

disciples had the incredible privilege of living and working alongside Jesus, observing his every move, and recording in the gospels what we know about Jesus' life and work.

We too are fellow-workers in this ministry of reconciliation, calling everyone to return to God, to turn from enemies into friends (see 2 Cor. 5). Jesus himself specifically told his disciples, "I don't call you servants any longer, for servants are not taken into their master's confidence. I call you friends, for everything my Father told me I've explained to you." John 15:15 FBV. Jesus did not want disciples in the sense of servants. Rather he spoke about his disciples as friends—because they would operate not at a level of unquestioning obedience, but thoughtful acceptance of all things true and right.

In all his actions, and in his invitation for us to follow, Jesus never laid out a "disciples' manual." It is not about following a course, or achieving a pass in the discipleship exam. It's about knowing the person, and identifying with his thoughts and convictions, his beliefs and goals. It's ironic that when the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, and he gave them thoughtful insights with which to begin, we the disciples took such guidelines and turned them into a chant to be recited! Vain repetitions of prayers gain nothing, said Jesus: "When you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him." (Mt. 6:7, 8 NIV). The problem, said Jesus, quoting Isaiah, is with disciples who don't think, who believe they just have to do what they're told: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." (Mt. 15:8, 9 NIV).

Jesus repeatedly stressed this point in his teaching. His desire is not for followers who will just go along with things. He is not looking for numbers to prove popularity. He knows that the ones shouting hosanna one day will be shouting crucify the next. He wants honest disciples who will think and question, not look to their own self-righteousness and pride, but who are teachable and open to God. In fact disciples who are filled with a sense of their own importance are a liability to God. It's not about rule-based obedience, but a heartfelt need of God in our human hopelessness, placing ourselves in the hands of the only Being in the universe who can heal the damage of sin and restore us into his image once again.

Ellen White Comments

Christ came to reveal to the world the knowledge of the character of God, of which the world was destitute. This knowledge was the chief treasure which he committed to his disciples to be communicated to men. {RH, November 1, 1892}

The disciples were to encounter many and great temptations to unbelief. To them the prophecies had made it clear beyond all controversy that Jesus was the Messiah. They looked for the religious leaders to receive Him with confidence even greater than their own... but they were amazed and bitterly disappointed by the unbelief, the deep-seated prejudice, and the enmity to Jesus, displayed by the priests and rabbis. {DA 147}

To know God is the most wonderful knowledge that men can have... The work of Christ's disciples is to shine as lights, making manifest to the world the character of God. They are to catch the increasing rays of light from the word of God, and reflect them to men enshrouded in the darkness of misapprehension of God. The servants of Christ must rightly represent the character of God and Christ to men. {RH, March 5, 1889}

Prepared May 28, 2015 © Jonathan Gallagher 2015