

11 – Proclaiming the Gospel

Kingdom Centred Proclamation

The Gospels and Acts are united in presenting the Gospel as "Jesus' Kingdom of freedom and forgiveness is here now for those who believe, because Jesus has bound Satan." When we listen to the Gospels and to Acts we must conclude that the Gospel cannot be separated from healing and deliverance.

Healing - Not Just for Jesus

Jesus did not claim to be healing and delivering by His own power, as the Messiah, but that it was the Father working in Him:

"Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, **it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.**" (Jn 10:10)

The demonstration of the Kingdom was not limited to Jesus; it was the ministry He commissioned his disciples to:

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go ... **Heal the sick** who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' (Lk 10:1,9)

Paul was insistent that a powerless gospel was no gospel at all:

"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power." (1 Cor 2:4-5)

"The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power." (1 Cor 4:20)

And so, when the disciples are praying for effective Gospel witness, they pray for healing:

Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. (Acts 4:29-31)

And God answered their prayer:

"The Lord confirmed the message of his grace by **enabling them to perform signs and wonders** ... (Acts 14:3)

Our Emasculated Gospel

So where does this leave us? We must be honest and admit that we have mostly reversed Pauls' claim and said, "The kingdom of God is not a matter of power but of talk." This is surely our biggest challenge – for pastors and for every disciple of Jesus. Will **we** repent and believe the Gospel? Will we commit ourselves to pursuing the Gospel of the Kingdom – the "foolish" Gospel of Powerful deliverance and healing and transformation? Or will we settle for a "reasonable" gospel of words and well-wishing?

Dealing with Crushing Defeat

Perhaps we feel convicted of our unbelief and respond with, "Yes Lord. I want to proclaim the real Gospel of the Kingdom." But the practice of this repentance is a hard journey. Genuine miraculous healing is widespread and common across the world today. Yet most of us who have tried to move out in faith for healing and deliverance have experienced a great deal of frustration and failure in this respect. That is why this question is so important. Will we give up and accept crushing defeat, or keep trying because obedience and trust is more important to us than our own comfort?

This is where leadership and fellowship are so important. Let us commit together to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom, with healing and deliverance and to keep at it until we hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master."

Invitation to the Kingdom

Jesus defines the Gospel as God's victorious Kingdom now being established on earth, in the lives of God's children. And because of this Jesus makes a wonderful invitation and promise:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matt 11:28-30)

In this invitation we see a call to repentance ("Come to me..." involves turning away from ones past) and a call to discipleship ("Take my yoke upon you and learn from me"). A Growth Group is the ideal place for someone to respond to this invitation and become a disciple. It is also a very "light burden" compared to telling someone they must go to church.

The Gospel of the Kingdom in Four Words

Freedom: God wants to break the power of evil over your life and set you free to know His love for you (demonstrated through healing & deliverance).

Jesus: He sent His Son Jesus to show us the way and make this possible (share a Gospel story).

Repentance: He invites you to turn your life around from trying to manage it your own way, and instead put your trust completely in Him.

Baptism: If you want to make this complete change in your life, you must "die" to what you have been and let God give you His new life. This is the meaning of baptism...