

HEALING HURTING HEARTS

The tone of Luke's gospel pivots at Luke 9:51, "*when the days drew near for Him to be taken up, Jesus set His face to go to Jerusalem.*" Over the next ten chapters, Jesus moves inevitably toward His suffering and death. But He continues to encounter spiritual resistance.

A Samaritan village refused to show Him hospitality, and disciples wanted to call down fire in judgment upon these religious adversaries. But Jesus rebuked them. It was time for salvation.

YOUR RESPONSE? - Would you respond with hostility or healing? Christ Jesus was going to Jerusalem to work ultimate healing for people hostile to God. In Mark 10:45 He had told the disciples, "*for the Son of Man came to give His life as a ransom for many.*"

It's echoed in Luke 19:10, "*the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.*" It's what Luke 4:16-21 declares, "*the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*"

THE REASON - Jesus' mission in Jerusalem that coming Passover was to be the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. When that was accomplished, He would command His disciples in Acts 1, "*you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.*"

Just as Jesus came to Jerusalem to work salvation, His disciples are to take the message back out, even to Samaria and places where the message of Jesus was not received. To all people around you. Because the fire from heaven that Jesus brings, promised in Luke 3:16 and realized in Acts 2, that fire is the Holy Spirit, empowering Jesus' disciples to be His witnesses.

RESISTANCE - We hear these words, so why don't we do them? Are we like James and John, wanting judgment fire to come upon the sinners? Why not tell them the good news, that someone shared with you when you were far from God? As we saw previously in John 3:16-19, unbelievers are already condemned, hostile to God because they are lost in the darkness of sin.

The Holy Spirit overcame your resistance when you believed in Jesus as the Christ, Lord and Savior. By God's grace you were born again, and God brought you into His light and life. This is what happened whether your testimony is like Timothy who trusted Christ as a child, or like Paul who came to faith later in life. Either way "*God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control*" to not be ashamed about our testimony about our Lord, but to proclaim it.

REACTION - By the indwelling Holy Spirit, believers are not to react with fear to life and world circumstances, but we are to respond in faith. We are to intentionally present the good news of the gospel. God has put you where you are today to be a witness to the people around you.

You get to tell them about Christ who has transformed you, and given you hope and confidence and trust in Him. Just as in John 4, Jesus brings salvation to Samaritans and tells His disciples to "*lift up your eyes and see that the fields are white for harvest*" and go gather fruit for eternal life.

Maintain your God-given freedom of religion to continue to speak about what is right and true, with God's infallible Word as our reliable guide, as you are His representative on earth. Your mission is to grow God's family with the overflowing good news about Jesus, Christ, Lord, Savior.

REACH OUT - The Samaritans refused Christ. So He "*went on to another village*" (Luke 9:56). They missed the mercy of God incarnate in their midst, notes RC Sproul. "He gave them another chance as He didn't call down fire. But judgment is implied as He chose another village."

Jesus' mission was redemption. Our message is, "Jesus saves!" Christ Jesus came to bring healing and hope to hostile and hurting hearts. Jesus Christ is Himself our hope and healer. So there is hope for the people around you. They are in darkness and need the light of Christ. Will you respond in faith or react in fear? We don't persecute unbelievers, we persuade them"

"Forever let us remember that we have a ready and willing Savior," notes JC Ryle. "As He was ready to suffer, He is always ready to save. Never doubt the willingness of Christ to save the one who comes to Him. Let us then, like Christ, be willing to go anywhere, do anything, suffer anything, when the path of duty is clear and the voice of God calls. Let us set our faces steadfastly to our work, with the same mind that was in our blessed Master." □