

Column

My subject today is Christian discipleship. God wants your heart, but what about your hands and feet and voice? The answer is yes to all. No part withheld.

Put another way, God does not need little china figurines of piety to set in His celestial china cabinet. Rather, He needs men and women to do His bidding on the ground of this world. A pattern we find in the Bible is of God calling people out of the world and then sending them back in with a task.

If you think about it, this is exactly what Jesus did with the Twelve. At the beginning of His earthly ministry He went around collecting 12 men who would be the nucleus of his Kingdom movement, calling them, as it were, out of the world. The names of these men will be familiar to most: Peter, Andrew, James and John, etc.

But the story does not end here. At the end of His earthly ministry, just prior to His Ascension, we find Jesus sending them back into the world with a mission. The directive he gives them, often called “the Great Commission”, is: Go, make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19, 20).

This double movement of being called out and sent back in can, in fact, be seen even earlier in the story of Jesus and the disciples. The “feeding stories” stand as key examples. By “feeding stories”, I am thinking of the accounts where Jesus took a little food – a few fish and few loaves of bread -- and fed a crowd. Actually there are two such stores in the Gospel: the feeding of the 5000 and feeding of the 4000.

In each, Jesus takes food, blesses it, and then gives it to His called out ones – the disciples -- to pass out in the larger world. One writer has put it like this: “His hands brake the bread: *their* hands distributed it.” He still does. He still calls His followers not to be figurines – as beautiful as they may be – but players on the playing field of life. Perhaps Paul’s term for the Christian’s mission is the best: “workers together with God.”

An anonymous author in a piece called “The Christian Mission is Unique” captures this thought well when he writes:

“Many people offer food to the hungry.

“Many agencies offer economic and medical and educational helps.

“Many faiths offer partial remedies for life’s incurable ills.

“Many creeds offer a measure of understanding of the mysteries of life and death.

“But only the gospel of Christ offers all of these.”

The author offers some great thoughts in this verse, but we should not leave it without making it personal . . . without asking: What is *my* part in this work?

The hymnwriter Frances Ridley Havergal turns this last thought into prayer. Why not make these words your own?

Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love. / Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee, / swift and beautiful for thee. / Take my voice and let me sing always, only, for my King / Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.

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