

January 2023

Ministers Message

Mission Department Newsletter



Noteworthy

Upcoming Events

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #1
February 2, 2023
8:00 pm CST

LLC 2023 Phoenix Winter Services
March 16–19, 2023

LLC 2023 Ministers Camp
Stony Lake Camp
March 31–April 2, 2023

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #2
May 25, 2023
8:00 pm CDT

LLC Summer Services
July 6–9, 2023

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #3
August 24, 2023
8:00 pm CDT

LLC Ministers & Wives Camp
Stony Lake Camp
September 22–24, 2023

SLC Bible Course
Stony Lake Camp
October 6–9, 2023

LLC 2023 Ministers Webinar #4
November 2, 2023
8:00 CDT

A new year has begun. The spiritual turmoil of recent years now appears to be behind us. While sadness lingers, we look forward to work in the Lord's vineyard unhindered by internal battles. We pray that God will bless our mutual work as we move forward through this year.

We have planned four Ministers Webinars for 2023. The first is just two weeks away on February 2nd. We will begin at 8:00 pm. The topic for the webinar will be parables. Parables, which appear in both the Old and New Testament, are probably most familiar to us from the teachings of Jesus. At the webinar we will consider Jesus' use of parables, types of parables, general characteristics of parables, and some general guidelines that can help us to understand a parable.

There will also be webinars in May, August, and November. The November webinar is our traditional event on the first Thursday of November. Schedule details are available in the "Noteworthy" panel on the left. Please mark the dates in your calendar. Additional details for each webinar will be provided in subsequent issues of the Ministers Message. The LLC will also hold a Ministers Camp March 31st–April 2nd at Stony Lake Camp. Be sure to sign up by March 1st.

Ministers Message will again be published six times in 2023. We will continue with the "Jesus Converses" and the "Epistle Postil" articles. Both those articles will be provided as audio files as well. The epistle texts this year will be for the 4th Sunday of the publication month and from year 2 of the lectionary. We hope that you find them informative and useful.

[Mark 5:1–20]

Appointing a Missionary

Esa Tuomaala

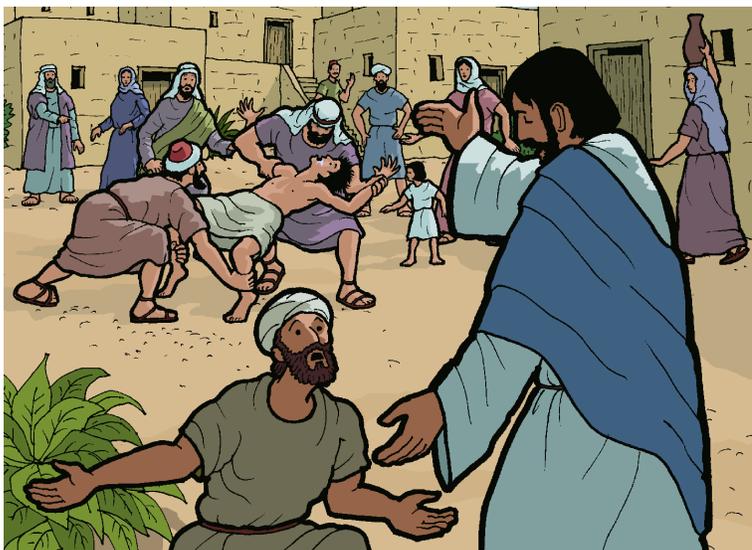
APPOINTING A MISSIONARY

This word of the Bible is a mission command given by Jesus. Usually, the mission command is understood to mean those words of the resurrected Jesus, which He pronounced to a group of His disciples as He sent them with the word of the gospel to the entire world. The word of this text is addressed to one individual. In its brevity it expresses much. It defines a rather narrow mission field. A person's own home was sufficient. The hearers of the mission sermon were relatives. The content of the sermon was to be how the missionary himself had been able to receive and experience God's great grace.

A MAN PLAGUED BY AN UNCLEAN SPIRIT

In studying the fifth chapter of Mark more broadly, a more detailed view of the life of the person who received that mission command opens up. At the beginning of the chapter it is told that he had an unclean spirit. Under its influence he had become so maniacal that no shackles put on him by people could hold him. His path had led from human dwellings to burial caves. Even such a person approached Jesus. Jesus did not flee from him.

A shout was heard from the mouth of the man vexed by the unclean spirit, which wasn't really the man's own voice, but rather the speech of the demonic



JESUS CONVERSES

The gospels present us with a rich picture of Jesus' public ministry. There we find His works and miracles, teachings, parables, and also some of His conversations. Some of those conversations were with adversaries, some with the curious, and others with the downcast or seeking. Some of the conversations were with individuals and others were with groups.

In these conversations we can see how Jesus approached people and responded to their questions. His teaching, methods, and manner offer us valuable lessons. We can apply them in our own lives and in our work as servants of the Word. The articles in this series will examine some of the enlightening conversations that took place between the Son of God and His contemporaries.

spirits: "What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee by God, that thou torment me not" (Mark 5:7). The person of Jesus truly did not remain a secret this time. The devils recognized Jesus' divinity and at the same time started a defensive battle. Their only request was that Jesus wouldn't bother this possessed person, but rather leave him alone. The same request is in the minds of countless people who sleep without sorrow even now. When God's kingdom approaches, they wince and often express the wish that the believers would not bother them with the sermon of repentance. God has not—to people's good fortune—complied with such a wish. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1). God has spoken through His servants and has not been silent even though people have earnestly hoped and wished for it. If God would have left people alone, the way to heaven would have never opened to them.

THE DEVILS ASK FOR A DWELLING PLACE

The evangelist has also told of the amazing discussion which the legion of devils that were in the man had with Jesus. We see very clearly from that discussion that these spirits could not even imagine that they could resist Jesus's power. They

knew that they had to leave their habitation, a precious redeemed person. But even these travelers needed a dwelling. They wanted to enter a nearby clustered herd of nearly two thousand pigs. Jesus allowed this, and the entire herd, driven by the demons, plunged into the lake. A man was freed and almost two thousand domestic animals drowned. Why Jesus guided the matter in this way cannot be concluded with certainty from the text. If a financially minded person saw the situation, he may have shook his head and been troubled by the great damage that Jesus's act caused. But in that deed, Jesus's position toward people is evident. In another context Jesus proclaims that His disciples are more valuable than many sparrows. Through this deed, Jesus declared that the freeing of a person from the shackles of the enemy of the soul is such a great event that it pays to sacrifice much for it.

THE HEALED MAN IS SENT HOME

Jesus drove the demonic spirits out of the man through His word. It was only after this – or this is what we could say – before He was able to talk with the man. The healed man had only one request for Jesus. When Jesus was entering the ship, as He had been requested to do by the people, the healed man wanted to enter the same ship and leave with Jesus. Here appeared a precious sign of faith: love for his Healer had been born in the man. Despite this, Jesus did not allow the man to leave with Him. Jesus directed the man back to his home area, from which he had been completely alienated due to his sin and illness. Now he returned there as a pardoned man, a child of God. Surely there were matters to be corrected, forgiveness to be asked. But in addition, he had a message of God's great act of mercy, which he had experienced in his soul and body.

THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S POWER

The series of events which Mark relates teaches us many things. It is a manifestation of that fierce battle of spirits which hasn't even yet come to an end. In many homes

faith and unbelief fight against each other. It is God's desire to pardon the slaves of unbelief. But it doesn't go as well for all as it did for the demon possessed man described by Mark. All the same God's Word assures us that God's power is greater than the power of evil. That's why we can appeal to God in prayer on behalf of all our loved ones that are in danger of drowning. Only God's infinite power can raise them from their fall.

PARDONED SINNERS AS AMBASSADORS

Another matter in this text is that pardoned sinners are Christ's ambassadors in this world. The demon possessed man did not take a lengthy mission work course, but he still was an acceptable mission preacher. The most important prerequisite had been fulfilled: he had personally been able to experience God's pardon, he had received the forgiveness of his own sins. This is essential. Without this, he would not have received Jesus' mission command.

THE HOME AS A MISSION FIELD

We also learn from Jesus' healing miracle that God's given calling may be simple and in a certain sense very limited. The man freed from demons was not sent far into the open world, not even to the province of Gadara where he had lived. He was sent to his familiar home, which was his first mission field. Christianity begins at home. It is the first place that we confess our faith and relate of God's goodness. But even in this small area we feel ourselves very deficient. Lament of the home preachers does not seem to end in Zion. But still Jesus sends us, His weak followers, into the work of His kingdom. It doesn't require great understanding of the Bible or great learning. But faith is needed—and obedience.

*Jesus for the sake of your Holy Name,
because of your precious blood
I will go to the work of your kingdom
to help my neighbor.
I will tell them of Your mercy,
do the work of your love,
bear the burden of those who suffer,
dry the tears of pain.*

(VK 673:4)

2 Timothy 1:7-10

The Spirit of Power and Love

Pekka Nurmela

TROUBLE FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL

We humans often have worry, anxiety, and trouble in this world because of the many matters which we live in the midst of. The Old Testament travelers already traveled under trials. The Bible relates of how the prophets, apostles, and gospel workers experienced opposition and trouble in their work. The workers of God's kingdom of our time also often experience the same. Paul, nonetheless, encourages us to partake of the troubles of the gospel with the power of God.

He who arose from the grave victorious over death helps in both the internal and external distress that we experience from the world. In this world a person is completely under Christ's grace and salvation gifts and dependent upon Him (John 15:5). We encounter Christ's helping and gracious face in the sermon of the gospel of God's kingdom. In Christ, God will one day free believers from all distress and anxiety and carry them to eternal life (Rev. 7:14).

ABBA, DEAR FATHER

Jesus sent His disciples to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins to all people to free them from anxiety, distress, and the fear of death (Luke 24:47). He did not leave them alone, but rather gave them a promise. "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). The disciples did and yet do their work through the

Jesus Helps in Distress

4th Sunday after Epiphany

The day's epistle texts talk about the anxiety and distress which we humans experience in this world. At the same time, they also encourage us to trust in God's help and power. Anxiety and distress are a part of our lives as humans. They are a result of the Fall, and all people have to experience much adversity in their lives.

God's Word especially tells of that anxiety which has been a part of the lives of God's people in this world because of the wrath of the enemy of souls and this world's evil. The Bible contains many examples of God-fearing people who have had to live through great fears and trials. Nevertheless, through faith they overcame difficulties.

The day's epistle texts encourage God's people of our time, to believe and trust in difficult situations, like Paul did, in our resurrected Savior, who wants to and is able to help us. God is our comfort and our strength. He is a most suitable help in our distress. In man's distress the Lord is near. We can shout to Him for help, and He will hear us.

This Sunday's message encourages us to trust in Christ in all things. Faith in Him who helps in moments of distress and fear, opens an outlook of a future and hope. It encourages us to securely continue forward in our lives. God will one day free believers from all distress and carry them to everlasting life.

authority and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of those believing in Christ and encourages and comforts during moments of fear and distress. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we

Epistle Postil

cry, Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15). Christ’s work in the world continues in His congregation as the work of the Holy Spirit. He gathers, builds, encourages, enlightens, and sanctifies.

GOD’S SAVING LOVE

The gospel of God’s kingdom often receives its greatest opposition, persecution, and ridicule from the world and false godliness. All the same, God’s Word encourages the gospel workers to preach the gospel of Christ for the salvation of souls without fear or shame: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). God yet calls people to believe the gospel for the salvation of their own souls through the sermon of the Holy Spirit.

In this message, a frightened and distressed person encounters God’s saving love in Jesus Christ (John 3:16). God prepared this for all people, not because of our own works, but rather by God’s merciful love through the merit of Christ (Titus 3: 4–6). God’s people preach of the resurrected Christ, who removed death and comforts the hopeless and distressed person (Isaiah 25:8). A child of God endeavoring in the light of the gospel can be secure. Christ will one day call His own away from this world to a home in heaven (Matt. 25:34).

THROUGH GOD’S POWER

The Lord’s Apostle Paul encourages his young co-worker Timothy in the work of the gospel. He exhorts him to remember the precious gift of faith and the holy calling through which God had called him to the work of the gospel. Timothy also surely experienced his lack of gifts and strength in the same way as children of God today experience it.



That’s why Paul reminds him that God is the giver of gifts and that the power to do the work also comes from Him.

Jesus encouraged His disciples to remain in the True Vine, Christ, in His farewell sermon. The power of life flows from Him to the branches. Through owning His love, the work of the gospel is done (John 15:5). God gives the power and ability to do the work to which He calls through His Spirit (2 Cor. 12:9). The work is the Lord’s. The child of God is a sower in God’s vineyard, but God gives the increase (1 Cor. 3:6). “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

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