

15<sup>th</sup> October 2017  
Mark 3.13-15/Matthew 25.14-30  
Discipleship – Authority leads to Destiny

A fiery Preacher, of Irish extraction, stood on a street corner, expounding from this passage from Matthew's Gospel. As he came to the climax of his sermon about the Kingdom of Heaven, following Jesus, the punishment to come, about the darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth, a little old man piped up from the small crowd and, in a “gummy” voice shouted “what if you haven't got any teef?. The preacher glared at him and growled “TEETH WILL BE PROVIDED!!!!”. Having heard a “certain Irish preacher” outside Belfast City Hall many years ago, I have to say, I can imagine it happening!

But what has that, and what do the readings from Mark and, especially, Matthew this morning, have to do with discipleship and particularly the theme for this week, of Authority leads to Destiny?

The passage from Mark is, perhaps, a little clearer in that. Jesus calls His followers to Him and appoints the Twelve who we've come to call The Disciples to be with Him, to travel with Him, to learn from Him, then to go out and tell the world about Him.

On the occasion of the sending out of the seventy-two, Jesus tells them to “pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest”, then told them that they were the very labourers being sent out.

So with the twelve. They were sent out into the world, to tell the world about Jesus, about God, about what He's done. They're given the resources they need to do the work set before them. Given the skills and abilities, even if they themselves might not see them.

Right through the ages, that's been the same. Each Christian has their tasks, tasks which are a part of God's plan for their lives. Each is sent out to carry out those tasks. Not anyone else's, their own tasks. Some might be similar, some wildly different. But each task, each part of God's plan, is equally important. Each disciple, sent out by God, is equally important. None is greater than another.

It may be, quite likely in fact, that some, because of where they are on their walk with God, are given what seems to be more difficult or more visible tasks. As we grow in our Christian Life, as we learn to walk closer with God, learning more about Him, more about ourselves, learning to rely on Him and His Strength, so He gives us tasks which He knows are well within our capabilities to, with His Help, complete.

This thread continues through the Matthew passage, one of Jesus' parables concerning the End Times and the Kingdom. Here, we're told of a master going away for an indeterminate time. He gives to his stewards different tasks, tasks that he knows are within their abilities to do. People will know who they are, who they represent, so it should be very clear that what they're doing isn't of or for themselves, but for their master.

The master entrusts them with his own property, his own work, making them his stewards, to continue that work in his absence. He gives to each of them the resources they need to carry on that work and tasks that he's given them. Each is given something different, a different amount, but all are expected to make the best use of what they've been given. The master knows what each of his servants are capable of and he doesn't ask them to try and do something that he knows they can't.

Two of the stewards take what they've been given and, knowing their master trusts them, that he knows they're capable of doing what he's asked them to, in that confidence, relying on that trust, they go out and use what they've been given. We're not told if they found it easy or difficult, if there were problems along the way, obstacles that had to be overcome. We're just told that, in the power of their master, using what he's trusted them with, they go out and do what he's asked of them, and, as can be seen by the results, they succeed and are rewarded. Their reward is to be trusted with bigger tasks. They've grown, developed, in ability and in confidence.

The third, for whatever reason – it seems out of fear of failure and not wanting to therefore (he thinks) face the anger of his master, does nothing. He looks at what he's been asked to do and thinks "I can't do that!", so never tries. He might even have seen what the other two were doing, how they seemed to be succeeding, and feel even more disheartened, perhaps even thinking "I can never be like them". He misses the point. He's not been called to be like them, he's been called to be like himself, in the authority of his master.

I think, sometimes, that's one of our biggest problems, one of, if not the biggest thing that holds us back. We look at the task before us and we don't think we can do it. We look at others around us, see what they're doing, see them, to our eyes, succeeding and we think "I could never do that". So we don't try. We don't actually do that which we're called to do, that which we're supposed to do. Perhaps we're afraid to fail, perhaps, as with the third steward, we're afraid of what our Master will say if we do.

So we never grow, we never learn, we never move forward. We never gain confidence, never become that person, that disciple, that God so wants us to become.

We're not called to do what someone else is doing. We're called to do what God asks us to do.

I recently came across the following quote, “When I stand before God, He is not going to ask me ‘Why didn’t you become like Billy Graham?’ or ‘Why didn’t you become like Mother Theresa?’. He might well ask me though ‘Why didn’t you become the person that I intended you to be?’”.

Why didn’t I become the disciple God intended me to become? That’s the challenge to each of us this morning. Why didn’t we talk to Him (and other Christians) about it, pray, realise that, if He didn’t think we could, in His strength, do what He’s asked of us, then He’d never have asked? Why did we take what He’s given us and bury it instead of using it?

How can I, how can we, expect to grow, to learn, to move on to higher things, if we don’t trust in Him? How can we become the disciple He intends, that He calls us to become?

That is our destiny. To take our place at our Father’s side, having become the person and disciple that He intends us to become, that He calls us to become.