

Authority leads to Destiny

Mark 3:13-15

Matthew 25:14-30

We continue to focus on the theme of 'discipleship'. We've looked at how intimacy leads to affirmation, a growing sense that we are affirmed by God leads to a greater knowledge of our identity. Growing in our understanding that our identity is as children of God leads to God-given authority. And today we are focussing on how picking up that authority releases us into our destiny.

We often think of the word 'destiny' to mean the end point of a journey, the final stopping place. In the church particularly, we have fallen into the trap of using 'destiny' to refer to life after death, our eternal dwelling place with God. And for a number of years, in certain streams of the church, that became their main focus and purpose - the church existed to persuade people to become Christians so their place in heaven was secured. It almost became like a religious insurance plan. But once a person had turned to Christianity, what did we 'do' with them then? It certainly wasn't about growing disciples. 'Faith' was about focussing on our eternal life and this isn't at all how it was meant to be.

Life after death gives us security, confidence and a sense of assurance, undoubtedly. But our faith calls us to work for God's kingdom to be released here and now. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done - on earth as it is in heaven.

And Jesus reminds us in the Gospels that 'He came that we might have life, and have it to the full'. - not that we are to wait until we get to heaven, but that fullness of life can be enjoyed here.

And we are called to work for that kingdom so that people are able to enjoy the benefits that a relationship with God can bring - to grow more disciples here on earth.

The parable in Matthew's Gospel that we heard read today reminds us that God has entrusted gifts and skills to each one of us, but it's that willingness to use them... we have to be willing to work for the kingdom. That's what we refer to as 'destiny' - to be using the authority (the gifts and the skills) entrusted to us to build up his kingdom.

Picking up that authority releases us into our destiny. But destiny doesn't mean a mystical plan for our lives, but the very point of our existence. The purpose of our lives is to advance the kingdom of God in whatever sphere God places us - whether it's family, community or work (or a combination of each).

Our destiny is to step into that purpose. To realise that God has a greater plan for us than perhaps we even imagine.

And accepting that destiny changes how we look at the contexts in which we find ourselves.

If our purpose in life is to advance then kingdom of God, how does that affect the way we view the people we live amongst? If our purpose in life is to advance then kingdom of God, how does that affect the way we view the people we spend time with? If our purpose in life is to advance then kingdom of God, how does that affect the way we view our family? How will that destiny, that purpose, affect our relationships with others?

It's here especially that we see discipleship as something to be lived out as opposed to an event we go to every Sunday. Sunday should be about helping us to live out our discipleship.

God calls us to step into that destiny, wherever we are. He may not be calling us to change where we are or what we do (though we should be open to that too)... God often most wants to use us precisely where we are.

In our reading from Mark, the disciples knew their identity, were given authority and then needed to walk in their destiny - they were sent out.