

### 33 - SUCCESS AND THANKSGIVING

#### Luke 10:17-24.

Two brief incidents give us some insight into how Luke thought Jesus would have felt when the seventy returned from their mission. The missionaries themselves may have felt somewhat astonished. They were also joyful that the authority Jesus had given them had accomplished a great deal more than they could have expected to do on their own.

As in the previous section, Luke may have been referring more to post-resurrection missionary activities of the early church than to events during Jesus' ministry. Vs. 17 reads like the reaction we might expect from later apostles after having proclaimed the Good News and were debriefing.

In so many ways, Jesus' ministry was not particularly successful. He was making his way to Jerusalem knowing full well that he was most likely going to die. In the eyes of worldly people, that meant failure, not success. Thus the triumphant announcement that the powers of evil were subject to the returning missionaries seems out of place. The Acts of the Apostles, on the other hand, presents what can be read as a real success story.

Yet Luke paints a picture of Jesus sharing their joyful excitement. He appears to assure them that their present victory will continue in the future. It did, of course, as Luke and his audience well knew so many years later, but only after the resurrection. From his perspective Jesus saw his mission to bring God's reign of love moving inexorably forward at the expense of the

powers of darkness and evil.

Sharon Ringe points out that Luke was using the traditional view that Satan once resided in heaven and fell to exercise his powers on earth (Job 1:6, 2:1; John 12:31; Rev. 12:7). She puts Jesus' response to the disciples' return quite dramatically: "Satan can no more be restored to the former place of power than one can re-assemble a Roman candle that has already been fired. For Satan, the show is over."

Jesus reminded the disciples that they could never take credit for what had happened. The authority, like that of Jesus, came from God as the source of all authority and life itself.

His subsequent prayer of thanksgiving revealed this spiritual truth even further. The prayer includes other words that are identical with Matt. 11:27, and are usually attributed to the common source, Q. (Cf. 1 Cor. 1:21 and John 10:15).

The late Canadian scholar, S. Maclean Gilmour, commented: "Nowhere else does Jesus speak of God as a transcendent being who is hid from human knowledge, or of his own relationship to God as revealed truth that he mediates only to a chosen few. It is easier to understand it as an early interpretation of Christianity: A mystery that a divine mediator has made known to the church. This would be a Christian version of an idea popularized in the Hellenistic world by various Gnostic cults." (*The Interpreter's Bible*. viii.191)

Jesus then affirmed the seventy with a blessing and the assurance that they had been specially favoured. Or was it said "privately" to the twelve?