

REVIVAL AND THE CHURCH

GOLDEN TEXT

“He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned”. (Mark 16:15, 16)

USEFUL PRACTICE

In this time marked by lack of faith, the Church can only fulfill its mission if it is immersed in spiritual revival

SCRIPTURE READING

Mark 16:14-20

14 Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating; he rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.

15 He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

17 And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues;

18 they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well.”

19 After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.

20 Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

I – To know the characteristics that show the revival of the Early Church.

II – To be aware that spiritual revival is essential to proclaim the Gospel under the power from on high.

III – To explain that true revival has an effect on evangelism and missions, along with the manifestation of the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit.

INTRODUCTION

This quarter, we saw that, in its early days, the Church was known for its dynamism in evangelization, discipleship and care for the needy as a result of the great revival produced by the Holy Spirit. After they were endued with power, the disciples were never the same. They were given more power to fulfill Jesus' mandate. Today, more than ever, Christian churches need spiritual revival to proclaim the Gospel of Christ in a world that is in rebellion against God.

I - Revival After the Resurrection of Christ.

1. The discouragement of the disciples. After his resurrection, Jesus presented himself triumphant and glorious before his disciples who were discouraged, unbelieving, as if they were orphans, abandoned. When they heard the witness of Mary Magdalene, who had been at the tomb of Jesus, and found that He had risen, they simply did not believe. They were completely brokenhearted (Mark 16:10-13).

2. The appearance of Jesus to the disciples. After being resurrected, before the lack of faith climate that dominated the minds of the disciples, Jesus appeared to the Eleven who were gathered and afraid of the Jewish leaders. Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you" (Luke 24:36). They thought they "saw a ghost" (Luke 24:37); until Jesus showed them his pierced hands and feet (Luke 24:40). Even so, they did not believe he was the risen Christ (Luke 26:41).

3. Revival after resurrection. After his resurrection, Jesus gave his

disciples the command of the “Great Commission”: “He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned’” (Mark 16:15, 16). On that occasion, Jesus promised that signs and miracles would confirm his ministry (Mark 16:17). These signs are available to all who believe, in all times and places. After Pentecost, the disciples preached with anointing, cast out demons and healed the sick (Acts 3:6-10; 5:15, 16; 8:7-8). Paul and Silas were powerfully used by God (Acts 16:14, 15). Philip healed many sick people (Acts 8:6, 7). Thus, many other facts demonstrated that the Church of Jesus had received spiritual revival, indispensable to proclaim the Gospel under the Power from on High (Acts 9:34-42; 14:8-10).

II – Revival in the Mission of the Local Church.

1. Revival in local missions. Spiritual revival, as a result of Pentecost, produced a flame in the hearts of Jesus' followers. Even amid persecution, the apostles preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ with boldness, starting in Jerusalem. They were persecuted and imprisoned for having proclaimed the teachings of Christ in the Holy City, but they were delivered by the power of God and continued to proclaim the Gospel (Acts 5:27-29,42). This is the model for dynamic local evangelism: not only preaching within the four walls of temples, but carrying out personal evangelism in homes and neighborhoods. The revived church shows signs that Pentecost is active in its missionary practice. There is a demonstration that the spiritual gifts are active in its life and the love for preaching the Gospel of Jesus is evident.

2. Revival in regional missions. We can say that regional mission is one carried out in places farther from the initial action center. In a Brazilian state, there are many countryside municipalities or towns. They are our “Judeas and Samarias” to be reached by the work of evangelism. After impacting Jerusalem with the message of the Gospel, the disciples took it to many other places (Acts 8:1, 4, 14; Matt. 10:23).

3. Regional missions currently. These days, we hope that God will awaken local churches in metropolitan centers, in medium-sized cities and in small-sized municipalities to evangelize, fulfilling the “Great Commission” of Jesus. May this happen without the need for persecution in order to awaken us to the work of God. Now, we still enjoy constitutional freedom to express our faith and proclaim the Gospel to every creation, in all places, states, cities and districts. Let us pray that Brazil is indeed a nation that is surrendering to Christ!

III- Revival and cross-cultural missions.

In Acts 1:8, Jesus said that his disciples would take his message “[...] to the ends of the earth”. They won souls to Christ, and planted churches in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (Acts 11:19).

1. The first missionary church. The church in Antioch already carried out local missions, or urban missions, and many people accepted Christ as Savior (Acts 11:20, 21). Because of the growth of the church in Antioch, the disciples sent Barnabas there. That church became the first missionary church. Barnabas and Paul were the first missionaries, sent on cross-cultural missions (Acts 13:1-3). It was through Paul that pre-Christian Europe became a Christian continent. As we saw in a previous lesson, God raised up men anointed by the Holy Spirit to evangelize the old continent.

2. Evangelism and the spiritual decay of Europe. From Europe, the Gospel spread to the world, reaching Africa, where David Livingstone excelled, from 1841 to 1873, winning many souls to the Kingdom of God. These were spiritual movements so extraordinary that they spread to other places. Hudson Taylor was a missionary to China from 1853 to 1905; and there were other missionaries who gave their lives to cross-cultural mission work, from Europe. For lack of love and interest in constant and intensive evangelization, Europe, which gave so many missionaries to the world, have become post-Christian, developing into one of the places that need the Gospel of Christ the most in the world. Believers have become indifferent, stopped seeking spiritual revival, as the Word of God says (2 Chr. 7:14). There are countries in the old continent where not even 5% of the people attend any church.

3. Crying out for spiritual revival. Cross-cultural missions are missionary activities that fulfill the last stage of the Church's mission: “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). They fulfill the imperative “go” of Jesus, who commanded his disciples to go “into all the world” and preach “the gospel to all creation.” This missionary goal can only be achieved if there is a spiritual revival in all churches, starting with pastors, leaders or ruling bodies. May God revive his work throughout the world! Let us pray, like Habakkuk: “Lord, I have heard of your fame; I stand in awe of your deeds, Lord. Repeat them in our day, in our time make them known; in wrath remember mercy” (Hab. 3:2).

CONCLUSION

Revived Christians demonstrate commitment to God, to Christ, and to the mission of the Church. They have love for God's work and cooperate with local, regional and cross-cultural evangelism. In many Christian churches,

even in a century of lack of faith, there are signs of spiritual revival, with the manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and fervor in the search for lost souls. This is the greatest mission of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.