

# *Outbreak:*

## *Luke and the Person of Peace*

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It has been so long, I have forgotten just when 'the person of peace' first registered with me. But once it did, about 20 years ago, it has only increased in significance and centrality in my thinking, ministry, and discipleship multiplication. Though I had read the gospel of Luke several times, it being my favorite of the synoptics, the time I really *saw* what was before me began a wave of awe that continues to wash over me as this truth component is shared individually and in groups, on continent after continent.

At the time, I did not know Luke 9.51 is the pivot point of Luke's portrait of Jesus. At the time, I had no knowledge of the flow which David Gooding, professor of Greek at Queen's University, Belfast, stresses, i.e., that Luke's "presentation of Christ is arranged in two great movements: first the 'Coming' of the Lord from heaven to earth; and then his 'Going' from earth to heaven. The turning point between them stands at chapter. 9 verse 51." (Gooding 1987:9)

Indeed, Jesus "resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem"(9.51). And with "His face toward Jerusalem"(9.53), Jesus' dramatic journey to Jerusalem dominates the structure of the Gospel (9.51-19.40), for Jerusalem signed the capital of the nation, the place of the kings of Judah, the prototypes of the Promised One. In that city's temple God had shown His glory as at no other. To that city God had sent his prophets, predicting the details of the Coming Messiah. So to that city Jesus must present himself as Israel's King just as Zechariah 9.9 promised. But all that I had little inkling of. I had only been struck by the discovery of the person of peace,'

Now, years later, these are some basic conclusions and explorations.

The person of peace' is in the episode of the sending of the seventy, Luke 10.1-37. E. Earle Ellis' observation is striking and solid. "With significant qualifications (22.35f; Acts 1.8; cf. Mt 10.5) *the instructions of Jesus for the pre-resurrection missions became an operating procedure for the early church.*[my italics] This set of apostolic/missionary instructions of Jesus "contain clear predictions of how the future Church, especially the leaders, should live and work. The theology of the Church grew out of the words of Jesus." (Ellis 1974:154,147) And the methodology of the Church grew also from these words of Jesus.

*Seven foundational truths* are laid for future leaders (compare Luke 10.1-20 with Luke 9.1-11;Matthew 10.1-11.1;andMark6.7-13)

- *Responsiveness*: the fact of global, transhistorical, transcultural harvest readiness (10.2).
- *Involvement*: lay participation. None whom Jesus appointed were religious professionals(10.1). One and all, they were laymen—none had received professional theological training, none belonged to the priestly class, as was later pointedly noted by opponents (Acts 4.13-14).

- *Teaming*: Jesus sent out 35 pairs (10.1). The 70 were sent in teams. This truth was not lost in the spontaneous church planting expansion of the early church. In Acts we find Barnabas and Saul(13.2), Judas and Silas(15.27), Barnabas and Mark(15.39), Paul and Silas (15.40), Timothy and Erastes(19.22), with indications of lower level ministry levels until reconnection with team partners (see Acts 17.14-18,18.1-5).
- *Vulnerability*: enduring persecuting suffering, taking little save a sense of unqualified importance and urgency, they refused pay but accepted hospitality(10.3-16).
- *Authorization*: they were authorized to (1) subject the spirits, (2) heal the sick, and (3) preach the gospel (10.9,17-20).
- *Rejection*: personal affront was a non issue because the task was ambassadorial (10.16), but after a decisive rejection, teams moved on(e.g., Acts 13.51; 17.1-14; 18.4-11).
- *Intercession*: prayer for laborers to the Lord of the harvest for His harvest established the apostolic pattern of intercede/proceed-- to intercede for the harvest, then proceed into the harvest. Crying out and going out was the community's life rhythm (10.2).

Now, let us turn our attention to the 'person of peace', the 'son of peace'(uios eirnhh"). 'Person of peace' is a Hebraism meaning "one inclined to peace"(Plummer 1909:273). A person of peace is *some one or some group sovereignly prepared by God to receive the gospel*.

It is important to note that our Lord instructs us to broadcast widely, but the object of our proclamation and widespread contacts is to find the person of peace. Practically, they may argue with use, question, reason and discuss, but, like Lydia God has prepared the person of peace to respond. Lydia, you remember, "was listening, and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul."(Acts 16.14-15)

Before you ever make contact, before you ever meet her, before "Peace" is spoken to him, the person of peace has been prepared by God: that person has, within his own life times, among the boundaries of his own life, groped and grappled with self, sin, society, existence, so that the One in whom he lives and continues being has spoken to his inner heart and written codes of truth in such a way that that person, that person of peace, will be born afresh by the word preached. So that, by God's choosing and by our conversations that person will receive the word of God's message, not as a word from mere men, but for what it really is—the word of God which performs its work in those who believe.(Acts 17.26-28; Rom 2.14-16; I Thes 2.13)

Thus the early messengers were always giving thanks to God for the new converts because, as they told them, "God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth."(I Thes 2.13) Thus, any opposition was never an obstacle, for it was clear that through many tribulations in a culture unshaped by the gospel, we must enter the kingdom of God. For this reason, Paul reasoned, "I endure all things for the sake of those" persons of peace, "that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory."(Acts 14.22; II Tim 2.10) But regardless of even the treatment of the gospel ambassador, "the word of God is not imprisoned."(II Tim 2.9) For God has already been there before you get there. And in the most unpromising of circumstances, wherever there is a person of peace, Christ will enter in.

Jesus' instructions are:

Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house.' And if *a man of peace* is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.

Three marks especially characterize the person of peace.

1. *Receptivity*. The person of peace responds to the gospel. The Acts show the response may be through a process of searching the Scriptures, questioning, debating, arguing, dialoging, and persuading (Acts 8.28f.; 17.11; 16.31-34; 18.7-8; 17.2-4). Or it may be through an exorcism (16.16-18), a miracle or healing (9.36-43; 14.3-7), but response comes.

2. *Reputation*. The person of peace is a person of reputation. The person of peace, it appears, is not just any convert. Instead, the person of peace is a person with a reputation, a person well known by his *oikos*, his/her circle of influence composed of family, neighbors, coworkers, and friends (Wolf 1979, Castillo 1993).

Note carefully please. The person of peace is not required to have a *good* reputation. While a 'worthy' reputation was required among those of Israel (Mt 10.11-13), for any other within the community with a biblical standard would sickeningly smack of hypocrisy. But such was not the case with those among the 70', the nations. Now the person might well be a person of high reputation, as was Cornelius, Lydia, the Ethiopian eunuch, and others (Acts 10.1-48; 16.14-15; 8.26-27f.; 17.11; 18.1-3; 17.12) But consider the demon possessed slave girl with the spirit of divination (Acts 16.16f.), or the Gerasenes man among the tombs with an unclean spirit. No one was able to bind him anymore. No one saw any therapeutic path for his pathology. But everyone knew of him. He *was* a person of reputation, and he manifested himself to be a person of peace.

3. *Referral*. The person of peace refers the gospel with influence. Though the demon possessed man among the tombs volunteered to accompany Jesus, he was refused. His assignment: "Go home to you people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." He did, and went away and began to "proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him, and, *everyone marveled*."

By a very powerful code word, Matthew traces the path of this person of peace. In 5.17, though the people who knew him saw the man clothed and in his right mind, they "entreated" Jesus to leave their region because of the demons indwelling and impelling the swine. But by 7.31 when Jesus returned to the region of Decapolis, "they brought to him one who was deaf and spoke with difficulty, and the *entreated* Him to lay His hand upon him." Why such a turn around? Because, as Matthew ties the two accounts together, of the demon possessed man, transformed by Jesus, commending the good news in a mode their culture understood. He was a person of peace, a person of receptivity to the gospel, a person of reputation that accenting the life changes brought by Jesus' touch, and he referred the gospel with influence.

The implications of the person of peace strategy for global, spontaneous, persistent and reproductive evangelism begs our attention.