

CERTAIN OF THINGS NOT SEEN

~Other Speakers A-F: Richard E. Bieber:

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:1

Our Lord himself pioneered the way of faith for us. Son of God though he was, he divested himself of his divine rights, became a man and lived his life on this earth all the way to the cross, by faith. He was, "sure of things hoped for, certain of things not seen,"and certain of nothing else.

Jesus was sure that the Kingdom of God had now come to this earth through him, but he had no assurance that it would be well received. He was certain that the Spirit of his Father was with him, but he was not certain about what he would have for breakfast, or where he would sleep, or how many disciples would stick with him to the end.

And Jesus teaches us that to be sure of the Kingdom of God ... to be certain of the presence of the Spirit of God ... to have the kind of faith that delivers God's glory,

God's grace

to the world around us, we have to accustom ourselves to being sure of God and unsure of everything else. This is exactly what Jesus means when he tells us we cannot serve God and mammon.

- If we're going to be sure about God,
- we're not going to be sure about money.
- If we're going to be sure about money,
- we're not going to be sure about God.

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal. And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, no bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. Luke 9:1-6

The disciples had been with Jesus for some time soaking up his teaching, watching the healings. Now it was time to take some of the weight of this ministry. Jesus starts with the twelve whom he called apostles.... sent ones. He calls them together, gives them power and authority over demons and diseases and sends them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal, just as he does.

To make sure that they're sure about God only, certain that God is with them, Jesus strips them of every other certainty they've been accustomed to depending on.

And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey,
.... no staff to lean on,
.... no bag to keep your treasure in,
.... no bread to munch on,
....no money to depend on,
....not even a second set of clothes."

"What if I spill soup on my tunic?"

But now, instead of a staff, or a bag, and bread,
and money,
and two suits of
clothes, they are certain of things not seen certain of three specific things:

1. that they have been called by God,
2. that the power of God is with them,
3. that they will bear fruit for the Kingdom of God...

and it was so. They opened their mouths and words came out with an authority that utterly amazed them. They

stretched forth their hands and life flowed through them like an unseen river and the sick were healed,
the demon possessed were healed,
the blind and the lepers and
the lame were healed, and Israel was perplexed.

"What is this? What does it mean?"

...all this because they were uncertain about things visible, but certain of things not seen faith!

Not long after this Jesus called seventy more disciples together and gave them
the same power,
the same instructions.

After this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come. And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and salute no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages; do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you; heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off against you; nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' I tell you, it shall be more tolerable on that day for Sodom than for that town."
Luke 10:1-12

Here again we see that Jesus is giving them tremendous authority. But they are to carry this authority in the midst of complete uncertainty about everything but God ... nothing else to lean on ... no purse,
no bag,
no extra sandals,
salute no one on the road

..that is, depend on no one but God. Uncertain about the visible, certain of things not seen.

- Certain that they had been called by the living God.
- Certain that the power of God was resting upon them.
- Certain that they would absolutely bear fruit for his kingdom.

And this faith was confirmed by signs following, everywhere they went.

What does this have to do with us? Does this mean we're supposed to hitchhike instead of driving a car? Never travel with a suitcase or a wallet or a purse or a MasterÂ- Card? No. We know for a fact that when Jesus and the disciples traveled they had a money bag. (It wasn't very certain, since Judas was in charge of it.) And when Peter or Paul traveled from church to church in later years, they were able to pay their fare on the boat, buy their food, pick up a new pair of sandals when the old ones wore out. But the lesson had been learned and never forgotten:

"When you go out into the world to proclaim the kingdom of God and manifest the kingdom through healing, the trust of your heart can rest in only one place ... in God ... not in your purse,
or in your bag,
or in your car,
or in your bank account,
or in your water bed....
only in God."

And the time when our Lord begins to teach us this lesson about radical faith is at that moment when he chooses to send us out. When he says,

"Arise, shine, for your light has come."

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At the very moment when Jesus says, "Go preach the kingdom ...heal the sick," he pulls out from under us all the phony props in which we were secretly trusting. "Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals, salute no one on the road," translates in our lives into,

"I'm going to teach you that there is only one thing you can be sure of and that's me. When your confidence in everything else is shattered and you are looking to me alone as Lord and friend, then you will be certain of things not seen. You will be certain that -I have called you. You will be certain that I am with you. You will be certain that my Spirit in you is bearing fruit."

Because the time has come for us (you, dear reader And me) to "arise and shine,"

- to preach the kingdom,
- to heal the sick,

God is teaching us this lesson of faith, both through his word and through our circumstances; that nothing in our lives is certain ... nothing in our lives is sure ..nothing is dependable but Jesus alone. If we learn this the easy way, by listening and withdrawing our hearts from every crutch---fine! But most of us have been and will be getting a little help from the hand of God working in our circumstances to teach us to let go. So, don't be alarmed,

don't get depressed,

don't get angry, as he shakes you and sifts you. God is teaching us that as his prophets we have only one certainty ... and he is all we need ... Jesus!

Faith is being sure of things hoped for, certain of things not seen.

All the visible, tangible things in our lives offer us less and less security. The Spirit of the Lord is leading us into a three-fold certainty....

First, we can be certain that he. Jesus, has called us.

That call is an unseen thing. We can't prove to the world that we have it ... but we know. The Spirit of the One who died on that cross and rose again has broken into our darkness and he has spoken to us. He has said to us, "Follow me." And nothing in all the world makes any sense any more but to answer that call.

- Anything that interferes with that call,
- Anything that dulls the meaning of that call,

has to go ... get rid of it! Doubt everything around you that you can see and touch, but be certain of this: that Jesus the Messiah has put a call on your life and the only reason you're still here is to answer that call.

Certainty number two: We can be certain that Jesus is with us.

• Lo, I am with you all the days to the of the age. •

Can we see him? No.

Can we touch him? No. Yet his unseen presence, the presence of his Spirit, is the one solid unshakeable reality of our life. His presence is the only treasure that will travel with us to the other side of death. We won't take our money,

our houses,

our cars,

or even our bodies...but he is with us, and he stays with us in every trial, through every valley even the valley of the shadow of death.

Doubt everything else, for everything else will change,

decay,

sink away....

Everything. But be certain that Jesus is absolutely with us when we gather in his Body, when we step by faith into that needy world.

Certainty number three: Be certain that by the power of the Lord Jesus we are absolutely bearing fruit for his kingdom.

When the farmer plants the seed he sees nothing, but he is certain it is beginning to grow.

**Soon he sees the shoot,
 then the stalk,
 then the ears of corn. With his eye he never sees this growth,
 but he knows it's taking place.**

**And we need to be certain that as we abide in the Master,
 as we move in his will,
 as we speak what he gives**

**us to speak, there will be fruit,
 changed lives,
 new believers, sons and daughters of God, brought to birth through us...be certain of this.**

**And anything that weakens this certainty,
 that blurs the vision,
 that dulls the hope, needs to be pushed aside.**

Doubt the things you see and touch, but be certain that through your obedience God is bringing forth fruit for his kingdom be certain.

When Moses left Egypt at the age of forty fleeing for his life, he left as a man who had always been accustomed to having a fat purse, a fat suitcase, plenty of sandals, lots of friends.

When Moses came back to Egypt forty years later, he was destitute, he had nothing but a strange rod he carried in his hand. That rod was the symbol of the power of God which remained with him the rest of his life.

Moses was made ready to carry the power of God by learning to trust in nothing else. Moses was certain of three things:

- 1. God had called him.**
- 2. God was with him.**
- 3. God was bearing fruit through him.**

**Like Moses we have been in the wilderness and, we have been to the burning bush. We have no confidence in our flesh or our brains or our money or our earthly connections anymore.
 But we are certain of three things**

- 1. Jesus has called us.**
- 2. Jesus is with us.**
- 3. Jesus is bearing fruit through us.**

With these three certainties we will go out and shake the earth.