



*You are a missionary  
called to minister in the power of the Spirit.*

**Main verse:**

*17 These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe:*

**Main Point:**

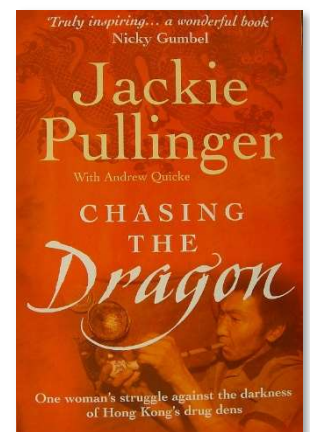
In our Gospel reading, before ascending to the Father, Jesus gave his great commission to all his followers. He told them to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation." But he didn't stop there. He told them that miraculous signs will accompany those who believe in Him. Why is it important to be believing God for the miraculous? Quite plainly, it is because miraculous, signs and wonders validate the message of the Gospel, authenticating it as a message from the living God.

**Intro |**

This week I listened to the story of a lady, now in her 70s, from Croydon, UK. As a young woman, she came to faith in the Anglican church. Immediately after receiving salvation, she knew she needed to share her faith with others. For weeks she cried out to God to know where she should go. Finally, out of desperation, she inquired what she should do to a quietly spoken Anglican vicar. He said, "Go buy yourself a ticket to board a ship, and don't get off until God tells you."

Well, that's what she did. The lady is Jackie Pullinger. In her autobiography *Chasing the Dragon*, she explains that she boarded the ship with nothing but a £10 note and a prayer that God would show her where to get off. When the boat pulled into Hong Kong in 1966, God ordered her to disembark and she obeyed.

She found her missionfield in the high-density, drug infested, Kowloon Walled City. Strangers were not welcome there, and police were afraid to enter.





Yet in this lawless slum full of opium dens, pornographic film theatres and triads who profited from crime and prostitution – Jackie Pullinger found joy in serving her God. She got to work loving drug dealers, heroin addicts, their children and gang leaders.

What would cause a young girl to leave her home and devote her life to loving the evil and unloveable? Well, perhaps I should let Jackie answer that herself. In an interview she says,

*My message is always the same; it's how to get us sure enough of God's love, so we can go out and share it with the lost. ... To me it looks quite simple. Having tasted of his love all I wanted to do was share it until I died.*

Is that not what we've been learning from our series in 1 John? Those who have experienced God's love cannot help but share that love with others. That is what compelled Paul to preach. For he wrote,

**<sup>14</sup> For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. <sup>15</sup> And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.**

So, those who put their faith and trust in Jesus, are no longer living for themselves. They are living for the one who died to cleanse them from their sins, so they can be reconciled with their heavenly Father.

And, having experienced that amazing salvation, Paul continues,

**<sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God." (1 Corinthians 4:18-20)**

It is God's love that compels every missionary to go to far unreached places with the good news of the Gospel. Notice that Paul said that we have been given, or entrusted with, the message and the ministry of reconciliation. This message is the outstanding news that because Jesus' died in our place, removing the disease of sin from our hearts, and rose victorious over death, the way back into fellowship with God the Father has been made open for us.

So, having experienced that marvellous salvation, God makes us Christ's ambassadors. But how are we to present and proclaim God's living and powerful Gospel?

Perhaps we could see how Jackie Pullinger applied it. When that twenty eight old girl began loving the drug dealers and heroin addicts, prostitutes and gang leaders ... she couldn't just pull out a tract and follow a script. In fact, she revealed that a logical and intellectual presentation of the gospel never worked on the streets of the walled city.

When asked how she went learning the language, Jackie responded:

*Well, it was a good thing it didn't begin too quickly because I just had time to do a short evangelism course before I got on the ship, and if I'd known Chinese I would have said too much. I thought that preaching the gospel was explaining how Jesus came to die for your sins and, of course, that's not preaching the gospel at all.*

The interview asked, "Why isn't it?"

*Because that's not necessarily good news to anyone who doesn't know love, who doesn't understand your language, who doesn't follow your logic. So, it was a good thing, because I found out that the people there were not listening anyway, they were watching to see how I acted, whether I really did love them. And if I really did love them, maybe God really did love them.*

What made you realise that gospel needed to be more than talk?

*Oh, it was my first convert. He was somebody who was about to join the triads. His name was Christopher and he met Jesus, but after that he avoided me for quite a long time. And I trapped him some months later by a sewer. I said: "Why have you been avoiding me?" He said: "Well, I came to know Jesus, but you gave me a library." I'd given him all these follow-up books. All the things that, in my culture, I thought would help. And it terrified him because they very much elevate learning in Hong Kong and Chinese culture, and so if you failed at school you couldn't be a Christian because they think being a Christian is all to do with studying and being good enough. And his worst fears were confirmed.*

*So, I thought, whoops, it's the wrong way around. I'd better learn how Jesus would do it. That's when I learned that the gospel must always be accompanied by signs and wonders – otherwise how do people know God is real and really cares for them?*

What Jackie shares aligns perfectly with the instructions that Jesus gave to His first disciples when He sent them on their first missionary expedition. To the twelve he told them, "Tell everyone about the kingdom of God and heal the sick" (Luke 9:2) To the seventy-two disciples, he said, "Heal the sick, and tell them, "The kingdom of God is near." (Luke 10:9)

How were the crowds to KNOW that the kingdom of God was near?

The message of the all-powerful God was to be accompanied by the actions of the all-powerful God. That's why Jesus made the audacious promise to all his disciples on Ascension Day all those years ago,

**<sup>15</sup>.... "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. <sup>16</sup>Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. <sup>17</sup>And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; <sup>18</sup>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. (Mark 16:18-20)**

And this Scripture has come true again and again in the lives of ordinary Christians.

We see this in the life of Peter. When he preached at Pentecost, he said, **“People of Israel, listen! God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders and signs through him, as you well know.”** (Acts 2:22)

Jesus had taught the disciples that the message of the Gospel was to be accompanied by signs and wonders, as this was how God designed His message to be validated as an authoritative message from God. So, within days of having experienced the infilling of the Spirit at Pentecost, Peter and John were compelled to share the power they had received from God.

When they saw a paraplegic man begging for money at the temple gates, they said to him, **“Look at us! I don’t have any silver and gold for you. But I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!”** (Acts 4:5).

And he did! Strength returned to the man’s legs, as Peter pulled him to his feet. Talk about great expectations of God’s power! Well, that first miracle, at the hands of the apostles, astounded everyone. So, Peter had to explain,

**“Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? .... It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.”** (v16)

And this first miracle generated so much faith and expectation in the disciples, that when they were arrested, and threatened to never speak the name of Jesus again, they prayed, **“now, O Lord, hear their threats and give us your servants, great boldness in preaching your word.”** (4:29)

But were they only to preach the word? No! They knew that Jesus told them the word must be accompanied by signs and wonders and so they prayed, **“Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”** (Acts 4:30)

That’s why Paul said, **“the Gospel is not in word only, but in demonstration of the power of God”** (1 Thessalonians 1:5 and 1 Cor 4:20)

So what did Jackie learn was the ‘Jesus’ way of being a missionary? Jackie shares that when all you’ve got to rely upon is the power of God to transform and save, God really does show up. Jackie learned that the only way to love the drug and heroin addicts during their detox, was by praying in tongues for hours upon hours. The result? In the process they would start praying in tongues themselves and find they had miraculously been released from their addiction. Crime bosses surrendered their lives to Jesus. Prostitutes were rescued and released.

Once again, God was accompanying the message of the Gospel with the power of the Spirit.

### **Application | So where does that leave us?**

We are Christ’s missionary ambassadors, called into His missionfield. So, where is your missionfield? May I contend it is right where God has placed you – you are the missionary He has sent to your neighbourhood, in your street, and in your club.

As God’s missionary ambassador, when you see or hear someone who needs to be pointed to God – pray for God to show Himself to them. If they are sick, pray for them to be healed. May everyone in Southlakes know that we worship a God who is alive and active in the world. That’s why I always want the sign on the corner to say “healing prayer.” We want to be known as the church where if people need a miracle, they know where to come.

For surely our God is more than able!