

Quit Staring at the Sky & Get to Work

Intro. Some signs are easy to read, but sometimes understanding the meaning isn't. I went north for college. There was a sign on one of the roads that puzzled me all during August, September and October. One very cold day I found out the meaning of, "Bridge freezes before road." Two southern boys went for a wild ride on some ice. For you who came south, one sign *you* need to understand is, "No Swimming." It means you will also swim with alligators.

I. I am puzzled by a couple of the "signs" in today's gospel that we as disciples might do. Healing sick people would be a wonderful sign. Driving out demons or speaking in tongues would be an awesome sign. But picking up serpents or

drinking bad stuff, that's not on my To-Do List. The reference about snakes may have come from Acts 28:3-5. During one of his mission trips, Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake, but he shook it off like it was no big deal. The local people assumed he would die. But he didn't and it became one more story about the miracles God works through disciples to bring faith to others. There is no clear reference to an incident of a disciple drinking poison. A small religious group does these things but they are **not** part of the main faith tradition. Do not test God in these ways; it's dangerous.

Before the Lord ascended to heaven, he gave disciples more last minute instructions for the mission. Teaching and preaching the Word of God is what disciples must do. Sometimes God will emphasize it with a huge exclamation-point-sign that

all can see. A physical healing is a sign that shows the presence of God at work. We have to take time – often in prayer - to understand the signs God uses to point us in the direction we need to go. Faith is an important part of interpreting them correctly.

Concl. Disciples make signs for others to see and follow God. Those signs might not be dramatic with fireworks. The signs we make must be clear and easily understood as the Lord working *through* us and confirming his presence *among* us. Those signs are as simple as speaking to someone at school or work who is ignored. Or welcoming a new neighbor. The two angel figures asked why the disciples were standing there staring up at the sky. Certainly it must have been an amazing sight, the Lord ascending to the heavens like a rocket launch from Cape Canaveral. If the Lord had stayed, the

disciples would always look to Him to do all the work. By leaving, they - and us - have to take responsibility for the mission of spreading the Good News. The meaning of the angels was obvious: time to stop day dreaming and get to work. The same goes for us.