

Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

- Mark 6:7-13
- Again we have a Markan sandwich. The story of Jesus sending out the apostles in today's text and his receiving them back in verse 30 is the bread but the meat of the sandwich which helps us understand it all is the story in between, the beheading of John the Baptist. Mark's arrangement of these events forces the reader to consider the cost of discipleship! At the very least, it requires death to self. One cannot fully serve the King while serving self.
- Today we see Jesus taking the next step in preparing his disciples for their ministry. To put this passage into context, look back at Mark 3:13-15. He appointed twelve whom he also named apostles. Not only were these twelve men called by God to come to Jesus to learn from him and to listen to him and to follow in his footsteps; they were also sent out as his ambassadors, his representatives. They had a job to do, and their on-the-job training was about to begin. They were about to leave the classroom to do an internship.
- D. L. Moody said, "It is better to train ten people than to do the work of ten people. But it is harder." Jesus could have done the work of the ministry himself, with no mistakes. But that wasn't his plan. How many of you are raising adults in your house? **All** of you who have children. You are raising adults. Which means you are not still tying the shoes of your teenagers. Or picking your 18-year-old's clothes off the floor or making his bed. No! You are training and teaching them as disciples, and they are learning from you as your primary students, your primary disciples. But not only that. You are not training them to stay in your house and be your student for the rest of your life. You are training them so you can send them out. There is an apostolic work in progress in all of our houses, and we must not grow weary in doing what is right, because we will reap a harvest if we faint not!
- Let's see, then, seven brief ways Jesus sent out the twelve.
- **He called them together and to himself. (verse 7)**
- Interesting, here. Luke uses a Greek word that means to call a group together. Mark uses a different Greek word that means to call a group to yourself. Both are true at the same time. Jesus called them together to Himself! That's what church is. Ekklesia, the assembly of the called-out ones. We come together to Him so that we can spend time with him and each other and so we can be sent out! It is interesting that Jesus sent the disciples out two by two. They were to go in pairs which conformed to Jewish custom. That provided company and counsel, and it provided complementary gifts. It also helped the listeners in a world where a matter was established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. As Solomon said, "Two are better than one..." So, Jesus called them together, to himself, and to a partner in the Gospel.
- **He gave them power and authority. (v 7)**

- Mark says it plainly: Jesus gave them authority over the unclean spirits. Luke expands that and says Jesus gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases. In either case, Jesus gave them the might and the right, if you will. The dunamis power to overcome demons and to heal diseases. And the exousia authority to do so as his ambassadors and representatives. In Jewish law, a person who was sent by another carried the authority of the one who sent him. That was true of the apostles in a special sense. They were the foundation of the church, Jesus the chief cornerstone. But it is true of us as well. We, too, are sent by Jesus. He calls no one to the bench but gives all of us the playbook and tells us to go do what we are here to do. And make no mistake. We represent Jesus. The reaction of men and women to us as his servants is their reaction to Jesus. That calls us to a higher place than we often realize, to live and speak and act and do in a way that represents Jesus properly. It also gives us a sense of purpose and dignity and calling. We are sent by the KING!
- **He sent them to preach the kingdom of God. (vs. 12)**
- Again, Luke's account makes this plainer, as Luke writes that Jesus "sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God." Mark says in verse 12, "They went out and proclaimed that people should repent."
- Why should people repent? Because apart from Christ, each is living lives as though they are their own king. To meet the true King is to repent, and live to serve him and not themselves.
- **He sent them out with specific instructions. (vs. 8-11)**
- This is where Mark spends most of his time explaining, and I think it is because Mark is emphasizing that the message should not become secondary to the journey, or the supplies, or the accommodations. They were being sent out to preach the greatest news the world could ever hear, and what they wear or what they eat, and where they lay their heads down at night were really insignificant in comparison. Jesus will simplify their packing in such a way that even Rick Steves would be amazed.
- **He told them what to take (and what NOT to take):** "He charged them to take nothing for their journey except...." (vs. 8) One staff, not two. No bread, no bag, no money in their belt. They could wear sandals and take only one tunic. A tunic was an undergarment that reached almost to the feet and had a hole for the head and two holes for the arms. There are two things at play here, I believe. One thing: The Lord is asking them to trust him to provide! If God is King, and we are his subjects, we can trust him to provide. "Take nothing for your journey." God will provide for his people. Missionary statesman Hudson Taylor had complete trust in God's faithfulness. In his journal he wrote: "Our heavenly Father is a very experienced One. He knows very well that His children wake up with a good appetite every morning... He sustained 3 million Israelites in the wilderness for 40 years. We do not expect he will send 3 million missionaries to China; but if he did, he would have ample means to sustain them all... Depend on it, God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply." There's another reason for the light packing, and it is simply this: they were sent with a message that was urgent,

and they would be going into a village for a brief visit and then moving on to the next. What they were to take was almost identical to what the children of Israel were told to take in Exodus 12, as they prepared to leave Egypt. Urgency! This was not a vacation. There is a time to rest, but this is not the time. The urgency of the message should be reflected in how the men packed and how they preached. The kingdom of God is at hand! The message is still urgent.

- **He told them where to stay:** “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there.” (vs. 10) **Matthew 10:11** (look it up) fleshes this out a little bit. They were to inquire, presumably of the God-fearers in the town once they got there, “Where would it be good for us to stay? Who fears God and will offer hospitality to God’s people?” Of course, there was no guarantee that they would be welcomed in that house. But the apostles were instructed to stay in one house in whatever town they were in, and not to hop around from house to house. Apparently some who traveled in those days would leave one house for another because of the food that was served or because the beds were too hard, or whatever. Jesus would have his disciples remember that the cause of the Gospel is much more important than our personal comfort, or our preferences. I remember staying in a house once with Cindy when we were traveling with New Directions or with Damascus Road, and the man there had a paper route as well as his regular job. Got to admire his diligence! But the walls were black with smudges of newspaper ink. It was on everything. Including us. There was a house we stayed in once whose owners kept an inside dog but didn’t keep up with the dog’s messes. Now, we all have had experiences like that, and I’m sure the disciples had even more Spartan conditions in some of the towns and villages they visited. But they did not go to be entertained or for a vacation, but to preach the Kingdom of God! What kind of witness would it have been had they given their accommodations the white glove treatment and refused to stay if the house didn’t meet with their approval?
- **He told them when and how to leave:** “And if any place will not receive you, and they will not listen to you...” (vs. 11) Does Jesus have any experience in this? Yes! We just saw how he was rejected by his own family and neighbors in Nazareth. There is a very important church-building principle here, folks. You preach the truth, and live it, and those who receive it will come in and be with you. Those who reject the truth will not. How should we respond to those who reject the truth? Change the truth a little so it is not so ‘black and white?’ Or, stop speaking the truth all together and speak what the culture wants to hear? No, we preach the truth and those who receive it will come in. Those who don’t receive it will not come in, but we do not ever change the message to accommodate the lost. In fact, Jesus uses a very strong word picture here: “when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” Jews were expected to do that when they came from Gentile territory back into their own land, to prevent defilement and as an act of self-purification. Here, though, the action is a visible testimony against those who reject the Kingdom of God. Jesus is never shown shaking the dust off of his robes when he left the Gentile towns and villages. But here he says, in effect, that those who are defiled, those who are unclean, are not the Gentiles but those who reject the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, as visited upon them by Jesus Himself or by one of his ambassadors! Those who rejected the disciple’s ministry were to be

treated as though they are outside the people of God, NOT to be run after or begged or accommodated in any way.

- What does all of this have to do with us? Everything! We also are sent ones. Are you on your way? Or do you need to “lay aside every weight and sin that clings so closely” so that you can run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith.” He is the one who sent us and will provide for us and surrounds us with a great cloud of witnesses. Let’s go.
- Prayer
- Communion