

“Sent Out On Mission”

Mark 6:7-13

We're in Mark 6 this morning, and in a minute we will read verses 7-13. In the hours before Allied troops landed on the beaches of Normandy, thousands of American and British paratroopers climbed aboard transport aircraft and flew across the English Channel. Men from units such as the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions were dropped into Nazi occupied France in total darkness. Their mission was crucial. They were to land behind enemy lines, capture key bridges and roads, disrupt German communications, and help clear the way for the forces coming ashore. But almost immediately, things went wrong. Clouds, darkness, barrage of enemy fire, and confusion scattered many of the paratroopers far from their intended drop zones. Some of them landed miles from where they were supposed to be. Units became separated, officers couldn't find their men, and soldiers couldn't find their officers.

However, something remarkable happened. Because they understood their mission, small groups of men began to form wherever the men found one another. A soldier might find himself alongside men from some different companies or even different units. But they knew why they had been sent. They didn't need perfect circumstances to carry out the mission. They had their orders, knew their objective, and they went to work.

In Mark 6, Jesus is about to send His disciples into some unfamiliar territory. They wouldn't know who would receive them, where they would sleep, how they would be provided for, or what opposition they might encounter. The success of their mission didn't begin with ideal circumstances. It is a matter of knowing who sent them and what He sent them to do. That's what we will learn from their example here in this passage. And so I want to talk to you today about what it

truly means to live your life as someone who has been sent out on mission for Jesus. (Read)

If you're brand new to Hopewell, we've been in a study of Mark's Gospel, and we've come to this passage which is the official commissioning of the Lord's twelve disciples. I think that if what we've been considering so far were like a movie, we might say the disciples have been extras and not actors. I mean they have been present for most of the scenes, they have been in the background, but up until now they haven't had any speaking parts. Mark 6 shows us how this is all about to change. Jesus is sending them out on a mission. In chapter 3, we saw how Jesus called His twelve disciples to be with Him with the understanding that He would one day send them out to preach. In chapter 6, they're sent forth as His ambassadors. And having been with Him, the time has come when they must be 'sent out' on mission for Him. That's the reason He called them.

All throughout Scripture, you and I are able to see how God is a sending God. He calls people to Himself, transforms them, and then sends them for His purposes. Again and again, Scripture presents God as a sending God who accomplishes His purposes through people willing to go.

And of course, Jesus Christ is the supreme example of the missionary heart of God. Every other person God sends in Scripture ultimately points toward the One whom the Father sent to accomplish redemption. The prophets were sent with God's Word, but Jesus is sent as the Word made flesh (John 1:14). Moses was sent to deliver Israel from Egypt, but Jesus is sent to deliver humanity from sin. God "sent forth his Son" to redeem those under the law (Gal. 4:4–5), and He "sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). In John's gospel, Jesus repeatedly described Himself as the One "whom the Father has sent" (John 5:36–38; 6:38–39). So the great sending movement of Scripture begins in

the heart of God—the Father sends the Son into the world to seek and save the lost, and then the Son sends His redeemed people back into the world.

John 20:21 — “As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.”

So verse 7 says, “And He called the twelve.” The work had grown so large that it demanded organization and shared responsibility. Because so many were following Him, it was necessary for Jesus to select this smaller group of men to travel closely with Him. The crowds had grown so large that moving from place to place became difficult. It was no longer possible for everyone who believed in Him to follow Him everywhere He went. From that point on, most could only follow Him periodically, while the Twelve became His constant companions and closest disciples.

Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples, but not before He chose just a handful to pour His own life into and then would appoint as His apostles. Who were they?

Charles Swindoll — *“He didn’t search the temple in Jerusalem for the best and brightest scholars. He ignored the schools of meticulous Pharisees who devoted their lives to strict obedience to the law. Instead, He chose James and John, known to their friends as the ‘Sons of Thunder’ (Mark 3:17, quite likely because of their bombastic tempers). He chose timid Andrew and his brash, outspoken brother, Simon. He invited the despised Roman collaborator Levi, who came to be known as Matthew, which means ‘gift of God.’ He picked cynical Bartholomew (a.k.a. Nathaniel, John 1:45) and Thomas, known for his questions and doubts. He hand-selected working-class, uneducated men with obvious flaws. Why would He? How could He? It is important to remember that Jesus saw His men not as what they were, but as what they were to become.”*

In only three and a half years, Jesus will get His message out, complete His mission, and pay the debt for our sins through His death on the cross. On top of that, Jesus had a group of twelve men to train. Three years in which the Son of God ministered, and within that time frame He will hand things over to these men to continue His work, and then He would be gone physically. And His mission would be carried on by these very human individuals, people like you and me, despite all their faults and failures.

We read about these men throughout the gospels. Usually, they are behind the scenes. But here in our text, the group is front and center. We find the Twelve mentioned by name in four places—**Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:12-16, and Acts 1:13**. We know them as ‘the Twelve’ or the disciples.

“Disciple”—*the Greek word is ‘μαθητής’ (mathētēs) and means learner; one who learns by doing the same*

These are the twelve ‘learners’ who were closely disciplined by Jesus, men who would later change the world. And they would become His twelve ‘apostles’ which means ‘sent out’ ones, those who would be His official representatives. So that as He taught them, Jesus gradually released them into ministry through a four-step process. What was it?

- Jesus ministered and the disciples watched Him

He taught God’s truth while they observed, listened, and learned as part of the crowd. When Jesus went into the synagogue, or when He healed the sick and delivered those who were demon possessed, they were there to watch Him closely.

- Jesus allowed the disciples to assist Him in ministry

When He fed the multitude, we read that He broke the bread and performed the miracle, but the disciples then distributed the pieces to the hungry crowd. And they collected the fragments that remained.

- The disciples did the ministry, with Jesus' assistance

Later in Mark 9, the disciples had been trying to cast out a demon from a possessed boy, but they were failing at it. In frustration, the boy's father turned to Jesus and asked Him to intervene.

- Jesus watched as the disciples ministered to others

He sends them out with specific instructions, and we now see this in Mark 6. And so He ministered, they watched. He ministered, they assisted. They minister, He assisted. They minister, He watched. Their discipleship was a very intentional process that He directed. And here in Mark 6, Jesus sends the twelve in His name. Verse 7 says that Jesus sends them out. The Greek word there is 'apostello' which is the word we get 'apostle' from. An apostle is a 'sent one.' It means to be officially sent as an ambassador on a commission to represent another, and to perform some task. Even though the mission specifically applied to the twelve apostles, there are some things we can discern for our own lives as Christ's followers about what it means to live 'sent out' on mission.

1—The AUTHORITY for their mission (6:7)

"And He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits."

Rather than divine power being restrained, we find that the theme in these verses is divine power is being reproduced in the twelve disciples. Where there is unbelief, there is an absence of power. We saw that in the previous verses with

the people of Nazareth. Jesus came to His own, but they don't receive Him. Verse 5 says He could do no mighty work there, and He marveled because of their unbelief. It would be an important lesson for the disciples. They too will face rejection, but they must not let it discourage them or keep them from the mission. They're being sent out to Israel, and notice it says that He sends them out 'two by two.' In other words, they are not being sent out alone. It would be an intimidating thing to tackle the mission alone, but Jesus sees to it that they have one another.

There is wisdom in partnership:

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12—“Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

Notice that verse 7 says He gave them 'authority.' It refers to the right to exercise power, or the ability or strength with which one has been endued. They are not sent out in their own strength, but in Christ's strength and power. And this will become even more pronounced later on when they are supplied with the Holy Spirit who comes to live within them.

Just as Jesus wanted these disciples to serve Him in the strength that He supplies, He wants us to serve Him the same way. A divine mission must be supplied with divine power. The apostles are sent out with Christ's authority as His representatives. And though their office was unique in church history, there is a sense in which we too are Christ's representatives to a lost world.

2 Corinthians 5:20—“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us.”

We cannot do what the apostles did, nor are we expected to. But the fact of the matter is that Jesus came from heaven, He died on the cross, He was buried, He rose again, He ascended to heaven and has supplied us with the Holy Spirit who came to empower the church to go out and impact the world. We are to serve the Lord with His own divine power that He supplies. Now, that verb ‘gave’ them authority in verse 7 is in the imperfect tense, which means that He kept on giving them the power they needed all through their mission. It was a limitless supply of power. Paul explains it this way:

2 Corinthians 3:4-6—“Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant.”

Paul says, “Our sufficiency as gospel servants is from God who has made us sufficient.” That is, He has supplied us with all the power we need to do what He has called us to do. He says that it is not of the letter but of the Spirit. His confidence doesn’t come from his own performance, but is in the power of God’s Spirit. It is in that sense that God has made him capable of participating in God’s mission, for God’s Spirit accomplishes what he could never accomplish in his own strength. The same thing is true for us. Notice something else:

2—The SIMPLICITY in their mission (6:8-10)

“He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts—but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. And

he said to them, ‘Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there.’

Notice that Jesus tells them in verse 8 to take nothing for their journey. He tells them to keep things simple and He says, “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts, sandals but not an extra tunic.” And it was for a number of practical reasons. The absence of clutter allows for mobility and flexibility. To be weighed down by unnecessary clutter would hinder their ability to move about quickly and freely. That is what Jesus is saying here. The mission for which they are about to be sent out is of such significance that they don’t need to be weighed down by the unnecessary. They needed to travel light and trust in God. The point is that they are to depend upon and trust God to provide for their needs.

Now, I need to point out here that Jesus is giving these instructions to the twelve for a very specific task in which they were involved. Which means you and I can’t make this a proof text against owning things. There are some who have tried to do just that. They make this prescriptive rather than understanding it as descriptive. There is most certainly a principle here, but keep in mind that this applied to a very specific situation involving the apostles. This is not a universal call to a nomadic or monastic life. I think that Eugene Peterson gets to the heart of it in the way he paraphrases verse 8:

Mark 6:8-9 (Message)—“Don’t think you need a lot of extra equipment for this. You are the equipment. No special appeals for funds. Keep it simple.”

And so picture the scene as these twelve go out. There wasn’t any danger of them being envied because of their possessions. They are not appealing to

people on the basis of material wealth or appearances. In worldly terms, the early disciples were unattractive, but they're attractive in the sense they had divine power for ministry! They had been with Jesus, and it showed. The likeness and power of Christ was at work in them, and it is a lesson for us all.

I think a good question for application here would be, "In whom or what do we truly depend?" Perhaps many of us are so weighed down by unnecessary clutter that it is virtually impossible for us to go to the mission field should Jesus call us to go. Our minds, our schedules, and our bank accounts don't reflect that we're making the mission of Jesus a priority. Maybe we're too busy trying to live the good life that we've forgotten what the good life really is. We're more interested in acquiring stuff than we are in winning souls. We spend far more time thinking about what we want to buy than about whom we want to reach. For instance:

- We measure the good life by accumulation instead of participation
- Our prayer life reveals our real priorities
- Our spending habits tell a story of what we value
- We know more about products than people
- Comfort increasingly determines obedience

We are bothered more by losing possessions than by lost people. A damaged car, broken phone, declining investment, or misplaced possession can trouble us for days. Yet we can interact daily with people who do not know Christ without feeling much spiritual urgency. We live in a culture that teaches us to use people to acquire things, while Jesus teaches us to use things to reach people. Amen!

Their mission demanded simplicity that was free from distraction and dependent on God. And then notice a third thing:

3—The HOSTILITY to their mission (6:11)

“And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.”

Jesus doesn't send the Twelve out under the delusion that all will gladly welcome them and embrace their message. Instead, they can expect resistance from the world. Some will not want to hear what they have to say. Jesus explicitly prepares them for the likelihood that people 'will not receive you' and 'will not listen to you.' But that rejection wasn't an indication that the mission had failed, but it was something Jesus told them to anticipate. Why is that? I think there are several reasons.

The message itself would provoke hostility from the world. Verse 12 says, “they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.” Repentance is inherently confrontational because it tells people that something about their present lives must change. They weren't merely announcing news that, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” That's certainly true, but not apart from repentance. They were announcing the same message Jesus preached.

Mark 1:15—“Repent and believe in the gospel.”

The gospel comforts the broken, but it also confronts the rebellious. It comforts the afflicted, but it also afflicts the comfortable. People generally don't object to a Jesus who simply affirms them. Opposition comes when Jesus claims authority over them.

Another reason they can expect hostility from the world is the fact that they are representing a rejected Christ. Again, the immediate context makes this especially significant. In verses 1-6, Jesus Himself has just been rejected by the

people of Nazareth. Now, in verse 7, He sends the Twelve. And so it is probably intentional. Before Jesus sends His disciples into rejection, He demonstrates what faithfulness in the face of rejection looks like. They should not expect to be treated better than their Master.

Matthew 10:24-25—“A disciple is not above his teacher nor a servant above his master. It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.”

John 15:18—“If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you.”

In other words, if they reject the One who sent us, then we should not be surprised when they reject those He sends. But no matter what, rejection could not be allowed to stop the mission. Jesus tells them in verse 11, “If any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” Shaking the dust off their feet emphasized the seriousness of rejection. Jewish travelers sometimes shook the dust from their feet when leaving pagan territory. For the disciples to perform a similar action toward Jewish communities rejecting the gospel was a sobering sign. It communicated, “You have heard the truth. You’ve rejected it. Therefore, you are accountable for your response.” It was a prophetic testimony concerning the seriousness of rejecting God’s message. Paul and Barnabas will do this very thing later in Antioch of Pisidia:

Acts 13:48-51—“And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout

the whole region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium.”

We can expect hostility from the world in our mission to the world. Jesus doesn't tell them to stay until everybody likes them. Nor does He tell them to change the message until people accept it. Instead, He simply says, “Remain faithful, recognize when the message has been rejected, and keep on moving.” Don't let rejection in one place keep you from obedience in the next place. Notice one more thing:

4—The CLARITY of their mission (6:12-13)

“So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.”

This mission demands authority, it requires simplicity, it provokes hostility, and it requires a sense of clarity. And what I mean by that is the fact they know exactly what it is that Jesus wants them to do. There is no ambiguity or uncertainty. Notice that verses 12-13 reveal that the disciples' mission involved some clear responsibilities:

- They knew what they were supposed to say

Verse 12, “So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.” They weren't sent out merely to improve people's lives or to talk about the weather or to come up with their own words. The disciples weren't inventing their message. They were repeating the message of the One who sent them. They carried a specific message requiring a specific response—repent.

What does it mean to ‘repent?’ It is to have a change of heart, a change of mind, and a change of direction. It is to be going one direction, but then encounter Christ and turn around and go in an entirely different direction. It does not simply mean that we agree with the facts. Repentance is a change of mind leading to a change in direction. To repent means a person turns away from their sin and turns in faith to Jesus Christ. And that’s always a gracious, urgent thing.

- They knew what they were supposed to do

Verse 13 says they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. Their works authenticated their words and demonstrated the arrival of God’s kingdom. They weren’t simply talking about the authority of Jesus—they were demonstrating His authority over Satan and the effects of sin in a fallen world. So their mission involved both proclamation and demonstration.

And so when it came to their objective, they weren’t merely trying to gather a crowd, improve their reputation, or create positive feelings about Jesus. They wanted people to turn from sin and turn toward God.

Before I finish, what might be some application for us? One main point of emphasis that I want you to get:

Ultimately, our mission involves proclaiming the truth of the gospel.

There are a million things that we could give our time to, but there is but one mission. And we must not lose sight of what that mission is and what it demands. Verse 12 says they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. In other words, they spread the gospel by verbal witness. That same commission rests on each one of us as Christ’s followers. In Acts 1:8, Jesus says, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and

you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Of all the things that Jesus could have said, He could have said, “You will be My worshipers.” Or He could have said, “You will be My ministry leaders, My Bible students, My church attenders.” And all that would have been true, but He chose to say, “You will be My witnesses.”

“Witness” —word is *μάρτυς* (*martyr*) which means one who bears witness of what he has seen and heard

It is someone who is sent to testify of what he knows to be true. That’s our primary identity, and it means in everything else we do, that’s who we are. I am a witness, you are a witness. Therefore, we’re sent into the world as witnesses. It is a noun before it is ever a verb. How sad it is that most people go through life without any sense of purpose bigger than themselves. Do you see yourself as here to acquire, here to make something of yourself, realize your dreams, or to just have a good time?

Do you see yourself as being ‘sent’ to those around you? Because sent people understand that they are in their profession, or their neighborhood, or on this particular hall, or sitting next to this particular person in this class, for a reason. And that reason is to make Christ known. Maybe a good takeaway for you this week is to ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to one person with whom you can share Christ.

I’ve heard it said that Jesus doesn’t have a mission for His church—He has a church for His mission! In other words, the mission of God in the world is to be our preoccupation. That’s why we need power. That’s why we need to travel light. That’s why we must not fear the world’s rejection. And it is why we must

remain clear as to the nature of the mission. We must not let anything distract us from the mission that Jesus has given to us. Once we lose sight of that, we're in trouble. Friends, God sent His Son into the world with a rescue mission. Jesus came to die on a cross for sinners. He was raised to life on the third day. He has ascended to heaven and given His Spirit to indwell believers, and He sends us to those around us who need to hear the good news of His salvation.

Carl F. H. Henry — *“The gospel means ‘good news,’ but it is only good news for somebody if it gets to them in time.”*

Romans 10:13-15—**“For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?”**