

Ill Prepared Witnesses Mark 6

Exodus 12:1-12

Romans 9:1-16

Congregation. Psalm 45 6-8, 46:1-7

. Let us start this morning by reading our passage starting back at verse 1 here of Chapter 6. This morning we are picking back up after Jesus' run in with the Jews at the synagogue in Nazareth. Where they rejected him, even mocking him. Jesus does not stay long here in Nazareth but instead as we see in verse 6 he went around to other small villages and towns to continue his ministry among the people of Galilee. But this time he is not the only one who will be ministering to the people, but rather he appoints his 12 closest followers to go themselves and to spread the word that the Messiah has come.

We see leading up to this point that this was Jesus intention all a long. He never intended to be a one man show but instead commands his followers to go out, in 2's and witness to the area around the sea of galilee as well. We see in marks recording here in the 1st chapter is the account of Jesus calling to himself these men, then following in chapter 3 we see that out of those who are following him, he appoints 12 men and then in the following accounts we see Jesus instructing them, taking them aside and revealing to them the mystery of the kingdom of God, by explaining to them the meaning of the parables he taught. And now the time has come to send them out, to do that which he chose them for.

While Jesus gives these men power over evil spirits, and power to heal sickness in his name, that is not their primary mission, but it is only that which shows as a proof that the words they speak about Jesus are true. It seems today that there is an image of Jesus amongst some religious organizations, and the greater world at large of Jesus ministry being one of healing. And while of course we read of those events and it was a part of his minstry here on earth, his true purpose and ministry was to teach, and to preach.

The working of miracles does not necessarily grant commitment by those who witness them. Infact it more then likely had the effect of drawing massive crowds of people who were either sick themselves seeking a miraculous healing, or it would draw onlookers looking to witness something amazing an believable. It was only by the teaching and preaching of the word of God that one is faced with conviction. A person witnessing and believing a miracle truly happened has little significance on their faith, but one who accepts Jesus teaching on the word of God will experience the most amazing miracle, which is the new birth, faith, repentance, and belief.

It is only through the word of God that we can begin to understand and see a clearer understanding of God himself. No miracle performed will have that effect without the teaching to back it up. A good example of this I think is just nature itself, nature has order, it has a cycle and it can be studied, and understood. But, without the knowledge and understanding of the creator, it looks like chaos, a constant struggle and war, a continuous cycle of death and rebirth. It is much like the parables of Jesus teaching. Those who heard them could glean knowledge and information from them, but not fully comprehend their meaning and purpose.

That is why the gospel, the word of God preached is paramount to any miracles, signs, or wonders. Without God's word and revelation, there is not much purpose or meaning behind the natural world, or the supernatural nature of Jesus miracles and ministry. I think it is something that needs to be said because we live in a time where people are seeking prophets, or apostles, or signs and wonders for proof.

We seek the flashy things, things that we can touch, and see. We are impressed by the miraculous, yet it really is the word of God that has the most amazing miraculous supernatural power. What we see Jesus doing here by sending his disciples out is something that is not normal practice of the Jews. The rabbis would not send their disciples out on their own as Jesus does here and on top of that we see that Jesus sends them out in his name, and in his authority.

AT this point it would seem that the disciples aren't quite ready, they have not had a very good track record of faith and understanding and would seem to still be babes in the faith themselves. The works of the disciples has so far only seemed to either trying to impede Jesus mission by trying to pull him back to the multitudes who were looking for him in chapter 1 when his intention was to move along and continue teaching elsewhere. We also saw doubt and fear and frustration in the account of him sleeping on the boat as they were being tossed about by the storm. Yet Jesus sends them out, equipping them with power over unclean spirits and instructs them to take very little with them.

I think the important lesson that we can take from this is the fact that these men here in scripture that we look up to as being the pinnacles of new testament faith and leaders to model our lives after, area also still human beings, who make mistakes, who misjudge, misunderstand, and whose faith, and understanding grows. But more then that, Jesus sending these apparent noobs out into the wild on their own shows that it has little to do with our own efforts, and our own merit, but God can overcome our short comings, and still use us as effective ministers for his purpose.

That is why he sends his disciples out and tells them to take nothing for the journey. It is a reliance on God's provision, his guidance and direction. It goes back again to the draw of that flashy confidence, someone who seems to have it all we are naturally drawn to. We want to know their secrets to success, we want to aspire to be that guy...but Jesus tells his followers, take no bag, no money, no food, not even a change of clothes. And go, preach, and teach calling all to repentance.

One commentary I read on this passage made an interesting parallel with these 12 disciples and the Israelite fleeing Egypt. Here in verse 8 and 9 he commands them, “ to taken tohing for the journey except a staff, no bag, no bread, no copper in ther money belts. But to wear sandals and not to put on 2 tunics. In exodus 12 that we read this morning God tells the Israelites after they eat of the passover lamb in verse 11, with a belt on your waist and sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand So you shall eat it in haste, it is the Lords Passover.

They were to prepare to travel lightly, and swiftly, having their complete reliance on God, and we see the same in parallel here in Mark. Only take the bare essentials, and do not worry about the rest for God will provide for you. It is in this way that their faith will not only be tested, but also proven. Not having to rely on how well they are prepared for every challenge they meet, but rather to rely on God to provide for they have nothing. It becomes a living out of their faith, a proof of the truth of their message. Total reliance on God, who they are proclaiming.

Just like Jesus' ministry he sends these 12 disciples to minister but we see that their ministry is also 2 fold. Just as we have seen in Jesus' early ministry there is no proclamation of the gospel without powerful deeds, and likewise there is no power deeds without the proclamation of the gospel. These men were not sent to do something new, something different but rather to continue Jesus' current work and ministry. To go in his name, to proclaim the gospel and to cast out unclean spirits.

There is a lot I think we can learn from this example of the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. They did not have large elaborate gathering locations in an attempt to make themselves inviting to outsiders. They did not wear fancy trendy clothes, ride the fastest horses, rather they went out, only with what they needed and with the power of God's word. I don't know about you but it sounds like we in this day and age have things backwards.

The gather of believers is to be just that, the building you gather in, the location, whether a house, or run down office building, or a dedicated church building does not really matter in the larger picture. In our society we are very quick to judge everything by its appearance, therefor we attempt to make ourselves appear inviting, we concern ourselves with creature comforts, with amenities in an attempt to woo people to join us. And that I think is where we have the focus wrong, the gathering of the church, of the fellowship of believers is for fellowship and worship, a time to grow together, a time to pray and support one another. The gathering of the church is not a function of evangelism, it is a time of refreshing from the evangelism we are to be doing outside. Now there is nothing wrong with having a nice place to gather, or making it as comfortable as possible. There is no reason to go and meet in some miserable place if you have options not to, where you meet does not make it more or less holy, what matters is the believers gathering together, it does not matter where.

That is why I have little concern over where we meet, it is my belief that if someone visits and chooses not to gather with us because of our building, or our lack of programs, or our style of music, or teaching I think that says more about their priorities then anything else. Look at these disciples, look at Jesus' ministry, they were simple fishermen, a tax collector, Jesus himself was the son of a carpenter. There is nothing in any of them that would appeal to our natural desire..but it is God's word that has power, it is his word that converts the soul and makes the lost sinner cry out in joy, worshiping God. We gather in his name, to worship, to rejoice, and to fellowship together it really doesn't matter where. If a persons soul hungers for the fellowship and worship it should not matter the location.

In the following verses, 10 and 11, Jesus instructs his disciples how they should act while they are out on the mission he has given them. "Also he said to them, In whatever place you enter a house, stay there until you depart from that place. And whoever will not receive you nor hear you, when you depart from there, shake off the dust under your feet as a testimony against them. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorah in the day of judgment than for that city."

in verse 10, Jesus starts right in with the idea of Christian hospitality. The practical use, and expression of loving the brethren. Of sharing one another burdens, to be a witness, and a blessing to each other, one way of doing this is by opening up our homes to other believers. In the case here with the disciples it once again comes down to having faith in Jesus the one who sent them out to find others who will invite them to stay. And likewise putting trust in each other as you are expressing the love that God has given us toward each other.

There is no such thing as a believer who forsakes the fellowship of other saints. If one is claiming Christ, yet turns his brothers and sisters away, then his claim is pretty much proven false. It's the old adage that actions speak louder than words. Or as James puts it, in chapter 2, verse 14: "What does it profit my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself if it does not have works is dead."

You can not claim to love Christ, and hate those who love Christ. Haven't you met other Christians who you just instantly share a connection with? Knowing little of each other, with the exception of Christ, and yet there is a draw, and a comfort there as you can both rejoice over God's provision in your lives. That is the experience that the disciples here have on their journey; they meet people, witness to people, and their needs of food and shelter are provided by those who come to faith in Christ. This love for each other is a natural bond; it is the product of a new heart, a new life, a new focus which is found all in our Savior.

Jesus further instructs them that if anyone does not receive them, or hear them to shake off the dust under their feet as a testimony to them. This was something that was a common practice among the Jews if they would be returning from a Gentile area; they would shake the dust off of their clothes as to not bring it into and pollute the promised land. By doing this action, they would essentially be claiming that particular village, or home was like a gentile, unclean. It was a great insult to a Jew for one to shake the dust off of their feet. This sends a message to all those who were in the promised land that just because they were Israelites, that did not make them one in God's family; it eliminates the presumption that God's chosen people are a certain ethnicity, or race, for we see Jesus saying to treat that village or house as one leaving a gentile house. Just as we read in Romans 9 this morning, for they are not all Israel who are of Israel.

The disciples' purpose was not to condemn, but rather to cry out for repentance. We see in verse 12 that they went out and preached so that people should repent. Their mission was not to go around shaking the dust off their sandals at people, judging them unworthy of the gospel in an arrogant better-than-you attitude. They went, taught and preached that the Messiah has come, and he is Jesus of Nazareth, and it was not until they were rejected that Jesus instructed them to turn from them, and act as if they are gentiles and move on to the next village.

Once again a lesson we can take from this and apply to ourselves today is to be careful that we are not passing judgment and condemnation on people that God has put on our path to be a witness to. Far too often I have seen Christians stick up their nose as people they deem to be sinful, or sadly I have seen some act that people are too stupid to even be worth their time. This is not being a light unto the world; this is not being a disciple of Christ. Look what Jesus did these first few chapters, called some fishermen and a tax collector to be in his entourage, and then later we see him dining, and associating with these heathens and tax collectors.

The last 2 verses we are going to be looking at this morning basically sum up the ministry of the Disciples, of what they did while they were on their first missionary journey through the villages and countryside of Galilee. "so they went out and preached that the people should repent, and they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them."

This summary follows the same pattern that we have seen of Christ's ministry throughout this book. Christ had come, both in word and deed, not one without the other. He was not merely teaching as a rabbi would, he also healed the sick, cast out unclean spirits, and he gave his disciples the power to do likewise, but it always included both word and deed.

That being said, there is a new thing that we see here that disciples were doing, which was the anointing the sick with oil. This is the only place in the new testament that mentions this practice. Some like to make much of this practice today, we see healing ceremonies and church services where this is done. Yet it is done, only here by the disciples, on this journey. So I think it is a mistake to attempt to make it some sort of conduit of miraculous healing.

In closing today, I think one of the biggest lessons that we can take from this passage is to grow in our reliance upon God's provision in our life. And not only our reliance, but also to rejoice in his provision for us. Instead of complaining about our life circumstances, rejoice in the gifts he has given. He sent his disciples out, ill prepared for the mission, but throughout that mission they would be blessed by the people who showed them Christian hospitality, rejoicing in God's work. This also serves as a picture to us that we too are often equally unprepared for this ministry that has been given to us, yet in our weakness, in our struggles, it is by God's strength that we are held up. It is he who provides that which we need at the time to answer, and to teach when the opportunity arises.