

"SENT OUT BY JESUS."

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden

June 3, 2012, 10:30am

Texts for the Sermon: Mark 6:7-13, 30

Introduction

I am taking a bit of liberty with Mark and skipping a passage in order to preach on Jesus sending out the twelve apostles on this Sunday when we ordain and install new elders and deacons. I will return to the first part of Mark 6 in July.

Our purpose here this morning is to exposit this text, meaning to dig out the meaning of it and to do so in a way that finds the implications and applications for us today. We don't just want to look at the foundation and build nothing. And we don't want to just focus on building something nice without being sure it's well grounded in the truth of God's Word.

As we work through this text I am especially aware that it has application for pastors, elders and deacons, past, present and future. But there are also applications here for all of us.

In Mark 3 we read about Jesus going out to a mountain and praying all night for the selection of the twelve apostles.

Mark 3:14-15 [Jesus] appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach [15] and have authority to cast out demons. (ESV)

Jesus had and has two purposes for calling people to Himself. ***That they might be with Him and so that they might be sent out by Him.*** It's both/and, not either/or. Some people want to rush out into ministry without having spent time with the Lord. And other people just want to spend time with the Lord but never go out and do anything.

The apostles have been with Jesus now for some time. The events and experiences that I have preached this past month or so were a very important and necessary part of the apostles training.

They saw Jesus deal with conflict from religious leaders and members of His own family. They saw Him heal and cast out demons. They heard Him preach. They witnessed His power and authority.

Up to now Jesus had done it all, all the teaching, all the healing, all the casting out of demons. Now we are entering a new phase of His ministry, a transition point. The twelve are about to start learned by doing.

It would be easy to question Jesus' wisdom in sending them out so soon, so early in their training. They had not shown much promise to date. They had opposed Jesus, resisted Jesus, been frustrated and exasperated with Jesus and will continue to show that they don't understand Jesus.

Mark is showing and reminding his early church audience that the fulfillment of God's mission in the world depends not on their wisdom or ability but on the calling, authority and equipping of Jesus by His Holy Spirit.

God's providence and timing and plan are perfect. He knows exactly what He's doing and why. He knows who He has called and for what purpose.

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. [27] But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; [28] God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, ... [29] so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (ESV)

6:7, Two by Two.

It's not good for us to be alone. Two are better than one. Two can help each other. Two can encourage and lift up flagging spirits. Two can bounce things off each other and give council and advice. Two can keep each other accountable and guard from sin. Two will guard from temptation. Two can defend and protect each other.

There is almost no place in Acts where you see Paul working alone. And when Paul appointed elders they were always plural. Our form of church government is grounded in Scripture and in the wisdom of God.

The church is best served by a plurality of qualified elders. This is true of ministers as well. More and more church plants these days are being done by pairs or teams. Even the Mormon cult at least has this right when they send out their young missionaries.

The body of Christ is not about lone rangers or mavericks or independent spirits who don't need anyone else. Christ knows us and what's best for us. Two are better than one.

6:7, He gave them authority over unclean spirits.

Jesus doesn't call us to any task without first equipping us for that task. He's always giving above and beyond what we need. Since He has called you elders and deacons and since He has given you His Spirit and His authority, exercise it. To be given a gift and not use it is a great waste and an offense to His wisdom and will.

Jesus has given you a role and a responsibility. Don't shrink back from it, but say, "If God has called me to this, then I will humble myself under His hand and I will pray and work with all that He gives me." "I do, God helping me." And He will help you.

The apostles weren't better than everyone else or smarter or more gifted than most. They needed authority from God.

Elders and deacons have authority not because of who they are but because of what God says in His Word. He calls them, He charges them to watch their life and doctrine more closely than everyone else, He charges them to set an example for the flock, and He gives them authority in the flock, an authority that should be honored, respected and submitted to.

6:8, What to take. Take nothing.

Jesus told the apostles to travel light, just a staff, sandals and a tunic, no food or backpacks or money. In other words, don't trust in yourself or in your own resources or in what you already have. Go trusting God will provide what you need when you need it. Learn that your own sense of inadequacy is actually one of God's requirements for ministry, don't begrudge it.

Some of you think that's easy for me to say, that's it's easy for me to get up here every week and preach and lead and pray. It's true I don't get too nervous about being in front of you. What I get nervous about is being in front of God. Who is adequate to take holy things and speak of them? Who is adequate to speak to the God of the universe?

I have a desperate sense of inadequacy every Sunday. I plead with God for mercy and wisdom and words that will glorify Him and edify the flock. I know I am a chief among sinners and not worthy of this calling. I know every day that I am not very smart or articulate or wise or anything. Apart from Christ I am nothing and I can do nothing. My constant prayer is that what I do will be a demonstration to you not of any good in me but a demonstration of the Spirit's power and that you will see Jesus and not see me.

If I stand here in my own strength and wisdom and skill and experience I fail God and you.

Some in history have wrongly taken this text to be a call to poverty.

Jesus is simply sending the Twelve out on a short mission, one not meant to last a long time, so He tells them to travel light. In Matthew's account of this he records Jesus confining their journeys to Judea only, not out to Samaria or Gentile regions. We see in verse 30 that they returned after a short time. For longer journeys more provisions are needed.

While these words are specific to a time and place at the beginning of the apostolic ministry, there is in these words a warning about materialism and worldliness. Spiritual leaders must especially guard their hearts against greed, covetousness, and lust for the things of this world. They must set an example in contentment and generosity, dependence on the Lord.

Don't let worldly concerns distract you from your mission in the world. Don't seek independence from God. Remember the birds of the air and the lilies of the field and how God takes care of them.

False teachers and false preachers take advantage of people, they use guilt and shame to manipulate people asking for money again and again, getting rich off the flock.

6:10-11, How to act, especially when ministry is not received.

These are sober words. Very serious words indeed.

Matthew 10:14-15 And if anyone will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. [15] Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. (ESV)

What is Jesus talking about? Obviously it's something very important. Something so serious that if it's done God's judgment will be greater than the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah.

There was a custom among the Jews that when they traveled in a Gentile region when they reentered Jewish territory they would shake out their clothes and shake off their sandals so that no part of that tainted or polluted land would remain on them.

To shake off the dust in a Jewish city was tantamount to saying this town is like a pagan town to me, it deserves the same judgment that awaits pagans.

According to the word of Jesus the worst sin you can commit is to neglect the Gospel, to hear and not believe, to listen and not repent, to come to church but never come to Christ.

Jesus is telling us how supremely He values His Gospel. It's the ultimate treasure and gift and those who reject it fall under the heaviest judgment. When the greatest person in the universe offers you the greatest gift that can be given, to reject it is an insult of the highest order.

So Jesus commands the apostles to give a sign of how great a judgment awaits such rejection. To shake the very dust off ones feet was a sign of anathema.

The greatest sin a person can commit is to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and ignore it and not believe it. To hear the call to repent and to turn from your sin and sinful ways and walk in the path of righteousness, and yet remain as you are will land you in the lowest regions of hell.

We go to church, we give money, we do a good deed or two, we don't overtly break any of the big commandments, and we think we are good to go. We live our daily lives for ourselves and for our own wills, with little thought of Jesus and think we are in no real spiritual danger.

We live in a so called Christian nation, we have our churches which we attend fairly regularly, we have a Bible in our homes, we say a short prayer before we eat, we try not to work on Sundays, we listen to sermons about sin and salvation and grace, but what have we done with the Gospel? Do we love the Word of God, do we love it enough to obey it and apply it, do we desire purity and holiness?

In this warning of Jesus is an encouragement to all engaged in the spiritual work of the kingdom. Ministers and council members and Sunday School teachers and missionaries must be prepared to know that not everyone will believe and not everyone will respond favorably. There will be those even within the church who will resist or deny or argue against or complain against what is said. We must not grow weary in well doing, but plant the seeds and trust the growth and fruit to God alone.

Pastors and elders are tempted to become discouraged when they encounter resistance or outright rebellion. Jesus experienced it and says we will too. It doesn't necessarily mean the mission was a failure. The mission was to sow seed, the results are not up to us. We are salt and light, which some receive and others ignore or reject.

6:12, They went out and proclaimed repentance.

Scripture teaches plainly and clearly "that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Everyone single man and woman on earth. Therefore the first and most basic thing every man and woman needs to hear is a call to repentance, to a clear sense of their own sin

and sinfulness. All need to be brought to sorrow and grief over how great a wretch they are so that they will desire to be forgiven and set free and delivered.

We are dealing with ultimate matters here, matters so great that to reject them is to reject God and His Son.

There are no unrepentant people in heaven, none. It's as plain and simple as that. Two kinds of people, sinners and repentant sinners. Those who ignore this Gospel and those who constantly say, "God, have mercy on me a sinner."

The elders have a special responsibility to ensure that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached faithfully, in its purity, without compromise. They are charged to make sure the whole counsel of God's Word is rightly divided for the glory of God and the edification of the flock.

The pulpit is where a church stands or falls, the pulpit is where a church moves forward in God's favor or falls under His displeasure.

Elders are charged to talk to us about known sin and to urge us to repent for the sake of our souls, to confess our sins and repent, and to do so every day until our last day. "Father, forgive us our sins and forgive those who sin against us." This is our daily prayer.

6:13, Anointing with oil.

James 5:14 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. (ESV)

As an act of faith and faithfulness, any one here may ask an elder or pastor to come and anoint with oil and we will do it.

It's not magic, it's not an elixir, but rather a sign of obedience and submission and of faith in God. In the OT oil was always a symbol of God's presence and blessing, a symbol of God's care and provision.

6:30, Accountability.

Pastor Barry and I report to the elders every month what we have done for the past month. And then we go around the table and each elder reports what they have done. We are mutually accountable to each other.

And we are all accountable to the Lord and one day we will all stand before Him to give an account of what we have done and have not done, what we have done with Jesus and with His Gospel and with His call on our lives and with the gifts He has given us to use for the sake of the body.

Application and Conclusion.

The life of a spiritual leader is not a life of ease. It's about ministering to hurting, broken and sinful people. It's about dealing with sin and the effects of sin. It's about speaking the truth in love. It's about suffering for the sake of those who suffer.

The life of a spiritual leader is not about ruling, it's about serving. It's soul work, it's life and death work, it's work with huge risks and huge rewards.

The life of a spiritual leader is a life of warfare, spiritually engaging the enemy for the sake of the souls of the flock. Spiritual leaders may not do exorcisms, but they do minister to those in sin and those facing temptations to sin and those daily affected by the ravages of sin.

What a blessing and a privilege to be called into the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a privilege to serve the only living God of the universe. What a privilege to speak the truth and show compassion to those in need.

In this life let us travel light, depending not on ourselves but on Christ and His perfect provision.

No Christian is ever fully prepared for what God has in store for Him. God will always send us places and call us to do things for which we will have to depend on Him. He wants us to walk by faith and not by sight.

Let's be diligent to pray for our leaders. I close with words from the last chapter of Hebrews:

Hebrews 13:7-17 Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

[17] Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. (ESV)