

Mark 6:7-13

7 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; 9 but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. 10 He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 11 If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." 12 So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. 13 They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them. (NRSV).

Jesus sends his disciples to the lost sheep of Israel with the gospel. It is very important that they go in teams of two. In teams they can look out for each other, be responsible to each other, and motivate one another. Jesus gives them authority over unclean spirits. I hope you notice that Jesus has no trouble at all with unclean spirits. He can even delegate the authority over them to his disciples. He is confident in their abilities and instructs them to take no provisions. They only need to rely on the gospel message. The disciples went as instructed and preached repentance. I hope you notice how important repentance is in the Bible. The disciples cast out many demons, anointed with oil, and cured many sick.

This is the 1st commission, the beginning of gospel witnessing and preparations for building the church. They have a mission, words to speak and deeds to do. They are to announce the Kingdom of God is coming so it is important to get ready through repentance. Notice what Jesus required of them is to proclaim the gospel, lead them to repentance, cast out demons, and anoint with oil.

Let's say that you are preparing for a journey from Virginia to California. One of the first considerations is your mode of transportation. If speed is a concern, you will fly. If you need to carry a lot of cargo, you will go by truck. If a lot of people are going you might go by bus, van, or train. If you are most concerned with comfort, you might take a luxury car. Well, your journey of life is much more important than any journey across country. Your journey of life unfolds something like this. You learn to walk and talk, go to school, then work or college, you send your kids to school, buy a house, pay off your bills as best you can, save up for retirement, and coast to the end.

Somewhere within our real life journey we learn about Jesus. When we realize who Jesus is and what he is all about, we change the focus of your journey of life towards a journey of faith. We follow the teachings of Jesus and the life example of Jesus. We help others with their physical needs and spiritual needs. Our ultimate goal is heaven. However, it is very easy to get distracted in life and forget that our main journey is a journey of faith. We end up falling back into spending most of our time on our own wants and needs.

When you go on a trip, you plan where to go, how to get there, what to do, places to stay. If you are driving, you don't want to get distracted and go down the wrong road or in the opposite direction of your destination. No matter how good you plan, sometimes things just happen. We were on vacation in Washington DC when Chris was little. We were worn out from all of the walking, parking was difficult, one hotel cancelled reservation because we arrived late and I did not secure the room with a credit card.

During the night, someone broke into the trunk and stole my tools. You can't be prepared for everything, but you can be prepared to encounter uncertainties.

Sometimes in life we just get stuck in traffic. I have a friend that was seeking ordination around the same time that I was. We each had a list of items that we need to take care of. He had asked me to do something for him. I told him no, it does not need to be done. His response was anxious and nervous. I told him, the reason I would not do it is because I would not do this for myself because it does not need to be done. He ended up investing time and energy to complete his task and three days later called me and informed me that it did not need to be done. Sometimes we end up doing things that are unnecessary instead of realizing what is most important and focusing on it.

This brings us to the concept of freedom. We have freely received, are free to give, and free to choose. The disciples received the word freely; they must give the word freely. If you possess precious knowledge, it is your duty to share it. Everything we have is due to others; the church building and the house you live in, the streets you drive on and the car you drive, you pay for it but someone else built it with their hands. What knowledge we have is built upon the knowledge of others and it compounds exponentially. The technology revolution is due to compounding knowledge which is combined of all of the various elements of teamwork within a society of productive people.

Looking into Scripture for today, what Jesus did is what had to be done. He had to get the disciples ready for his legacy. In order for them to build the church, they could not count on provisions. Jesus knows that you have to leave the things of the world behind. If you are a man or woman of God, let everyone see you as a man or woman of God with a God first attitude in your life. We carry stuff with us whenever we plan for a trip. We plan what to carry; clothes, supplies, food, money, a first aid kit. I have heard that people spend more time planning for vacation than being on vacation. Some people start planning for vacation as soon as get home from the last one.

Jesus gives practical advice for the messengers. Go where people are friendly. You do not need to wrestle with the opinions of opinionated people that are ruled by their opinions and you do not need to bounce around looking for a more comfortable environment. You do not need to worry about people that do not listen. If people reject the messenger, they reject the Lord. There are plenty of people that are hungry for the word. Focus your energy on more successful and less draining aspects of your mission to maximize your performance. Time is limited. Therefore, do not waste time on the stubborn or ignorant. Go to the lost sheep, preach and teach them about Jesus. You have received the word freely. You can go out and give the word freely. You do not need the security of provisions when God is with you.

Your journey as a church is one of movement as you grow spiritually. Your goal is to go where the Lord leads you. A faith community is to do what the Lord commands. Look for areas of improvement in programs or facilities. Jesus revitalizes the goodness within us and his plan is not one of being idle. Jesus sent out his disciples means that he did not do it all by himself. It takes a team. We all have the responsibility to spread the word to anyone that is receptive.