

Sent By Jesus
Mark 6:7-13
ABC 3/5/23

Today we come to another phase of Jesus' ministry. Up to this point, He's done all the preaching, healing, casting out demons, & facing the hostility of the hard-hearted religious elite. That changes as He sends out the disciples as His representatives. Jesus multiplies His ministry by sending the disciples as His heralds throughout the area. He calls His disciples to carry out a specific mission & gives them the authority to do it. Though they won't be fully equipped & empowered for that task until the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), their internship began here. **7-13**

That Jesus **began to send them out** suggests He staggered sending them out.¹ Earlier in Mark, we saw that Jesus **appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him & that He *could* send them out to preach, & to have authority to cast out the demons** (3:14–15). Since that time, they'd been with Jesus, traveling with & watching Him as He taught & performed miracles.

1. Call (7) Jesus calls His disciples to Himself to send them out to spread the gospel to the surrounding areas. Jesus calls His disciples not just to be followers & learners but also to be fellow workers in His work. Here begins the long & glorious history of those who've faithfully proclaimed the gospel of Jesus through the ages. & we're to be part of that. We're to be His workers, building His kingdom. As Jesus said, **The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest** (Mt 9:37-38). Jesus is the Lord of the harvest & He's calling each of us to be workers in His harvest. Jesus calls us to Himself in order to send us out. He doesn't call us so we can spend our lives lounging as we watch Him work. Yes, there's part of the Christian life which is enjoying being in His presence. But He calls us to come to Him so that He can send us out to be the salt of the earth & the light of the world (Mt 5:13-14). Remember the demon-possessed man who was healed in Mk 5? He wanted to go with Jesus. But Jesus didn't allow it & sent him back to tell others of what he'd experienced (18-19). This is what He does for all of us. He calls us to Himself & then sends us out as His representatives. Every Christian is an ambassador for Jesus, sent to represent Him & speak His message to the world (2 Cor 5:20). While

¹ John MacArthur, *Mark 1–8*, MacArthur NT Commentary, p 286

Mark simply says Jesus **began to send them out** Luke elaborates saying, **He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God & to perform healing** (9:2). Mark later explains that **they went out & preached that men should repent** (12). In the same way that both John the Baptist (Mk 1:4) & Jesus (Mk 1:15) emphasized repentance, so did the disciples.

We're told Jesus sent them out 2 by 2. The text doesn't explain why but probably for fellowship, support, accountability, & protection. God gives us fellowship to strengthen us in our Christian walk as we encourage & build up one another. Going 2 by 2 may also reflect the OT need of 2 witnesses to confirm a testimony in court (Dt 17:6; 19:15; Mt 18:16). What one proclaimed, the other could verify.

We also see that Jesus **gave them authority over the unclean spirits** (7). Only demon possession is mentioned here but this is probably Mark's shorthand summary since, in the description of their actual work, they preach, heal, & cast out demons (12–13, 30). That Jesus **gave them authority** verified them as His messengers who were empowered by God. Not only did they have power **over all the demons** (Lk 9:1), but according to Mt 10:8, they were also given authority to heal the sick & raise the dead. Speaking of the miraculous power given to the apostles, the author of Hebrews explains:

How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs & wonders & by various miracles & by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will (2:3–4).

That they could perform the same kinds of miracles as Jesus proved He had sent them. He used miracles to validate His message (Jn 5:36; 10:37–38) & so would they (2 Cor 12:12). With the end of that era & Scripture being fully given, miraculous signs were no longer needed. All who claim to speak for God can now be tested according to the inerrant written Word of God (2 Tim 3:16–17).

Notice that not only does Jesus have divine authority but He can give that authority to others. To deny the authority of those Christ sends is to deny Jesus' own authority. Jesus says this plainly in Mt 10:40: **He who receives you receives Me, & he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me**, speaking of God the Father. He makes the same point in Jn 13:20 when He says, **Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; & he who receives Me receives Him who sent**

Me. To receive those Jesus sends is to receive Jesus Himself. The disciples were given authority for the purpose of doing God's work. They weren't given authority to do their own thing but to do the works Jesus told them to do.

The application for us at this point is to know the Christian life isn't a spectator sport. We aren't just here to watch others do the work of the Lord. We're to be participants in God's kingdom work. We're all to be fellow workers. If you've been called & saved by faith in Jesus, then He also sends you to do His work.

2. Instruct (8-11) Jesus calls the disciples & then instructs them. He tells them what they can & can't take with them on the mission He's sending them on. He begins His instructions in vs **8**.

The main idea is for them to travel light, unencumbered by the things of the world. They're to take nothing because God would provide for them. They were to go in faith & trust in Him to provide. To go out entirely dependent on the generosity of others for food & lodging is a scary thing. They go humbly & must be totally dependent on God for their support.² They're to take just a **staff** which was simply a walking stick. Interestingly, the specifics in Mark differ from those in Matthew & Luke. While Mark allows a **staff** it's forbidden in Matthew (10:10) & Luke (9:3). Similarly, sandals are allowed in Mark but not in Matthew & Luke doesn't mention them. Various solutions have been given for the apparent contradictions & people have spent a lot of time & ink on it. It seems best to simply acknowledge that we don't know the answer³ but because it's God's Word there is no contradiction in it even if we can't understand or explain it. In other words, though these passages may appear contradictory, they aren't. Matthew & Luke also emphasize Jesus' insistence that they not take anything extra for their journey. They were to be ready to leave at a moment's notice, without making any preparations or gathering additional provisions. All they could take with them was what they had in their possession, including the staff in their hands, the clothes on their backs, & the sandals on their feet.

² David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary, p 241

³ Mark L. Strauss, *Mark*, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT

Jesus then bans specific items. They're to take **no bread**. They're to trust in God to provide for them their daily bread. In fact, Jesus had already taught them to pray, **Give us this day our daily bread** (Mt 6:11). They're to bring **no bag**. The role of a **bag** is to store things but they're to trust God to provide each day. Jesus then tells the disciples that they're to bring **no money**. The disciples must trust God, not money, to provide for them what was needed. We too are commanded to trust God to provide for us (Mt 6:31-32). But instead of *In God we trust*, our life motto is all too often, *In money we trust*.

In vs 9, Jesus tells His disciples, **Wear sandals** but **do not put on two tunics**. A tunic was a long, shirt-like undergarment that was worn next to the skin. Wearing 2 seems unnecessary, so this may be saying not to take an extra one. Or perhaps the 2nd was for added warmth against the chill of the night. In either case, any surplus clothing is forbidden. They don't need to pack for every circumstance; they need to trust God to provide for them in all situations.

This raises the question: Are these instructions for all Christians, including us today? After all, it's commanded here by Jesus. When I travel to Africa, are these commands for me? Obviously not. These instructions were for these men in this specific situation. We know this because later Jesus told His disciples to take these things with them as they went out. This isn't a permanent vow of poverty. Jesus made this clear when He explained to His disciples,

When I sent you out without money belt & bag & sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" They said, "No, nothing." & He said to them, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, & whoever has no sword is to sell his coat & buy one (Lk 22:35–36).

The normal expectation for His followers was to plan & prepare wisely. The book of Acts & the writings of Paul make this very clear. These are instructions given to these disciples on this specific mission. We'll come back to this in closing. But the principle of trusting God to provide is the principle here that must always be applied by all Christians. As we carry out the great commission to go & make disciples of all nations, we must trust God to guide us, empower us, & provide for us. Jesus then exhorts His disciples, **10**.

What's this about? As the disciples travel, they're to depend on the hospitality of others. It seems to be they're not to agree to stay in one house & then move if they got a better offer. It would be

an insult to their hospitable hosts if they were to go elsewhere. In other words, they were to be content (Phil 4:11-13). Once they settled in someone's home, they weren't to look for nicer accommodations. According to Mt 10:8-9, Jesus also barred them from using their ministry to make money: **Freely you received, freely give. Do not acquire gold, or silver, or copper for your money belts.** In contrast to false teachers then & now, the disciples weren't to put a price on their ministry. They'd been given Jesus' authority but they weren't to use it for personal gain. Again, according to Matthew's account, Jesus expanded on this by telling them: **Whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, & stay at his house until you leave that city. As you enter the house, give it your greeting. If the house is worthy, give it your blessing of peace** (Mt 10:11-13a). This reminds us of our own responsibility to be hospitable. This is a theme that's emphasized throughout the Bible. We're to open our homes to God's people & we need to be gracious to host those whom God calls & sends our way. When the Jordans visit us in July, they're relying on our hospitality. One of us will have the privilege of hosting them over night.

The disciples' dependence on the hospitality of others, reminding us that the church is a family, a place of support, provision, & protection for its members. We see this clearly in the early chapters of Acts, where the church takes care of its own, with individuals even selling property to meet financial needs of the new believers (Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37). Sharing food & lodging also became an essential part of the expansion of the gospel. Christians throughout the Roman Empire would open their homes to traveling missionaries & preachers (Acts 16:15; Rom 15:24, 28; 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; Phil 2:25; 4:14; Phlm 22). The little letters of 2 & 3 John deal with issues of hospitality for traveling missionaries, praising those who welcome them (3 Jn 5-10), but warning against false teachers (2 Jn 11-12).⁴ Matthew continues,

But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace. Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom & Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city (Mt 10:13b-15).

⁴ Strauss, pp 255-256

These words, besides giving them instructions on lodging, underscore the consequences of rejecting the gospel (1 Cor 16:22; 2 Thes 1:6–9). Those who’ve been exposed to the truth of salvation, & knowingly reject it, will receive eternal punishment (Heb 10:29). This allows the messenger to move on. One cannot coerce, entice, or threaten people into the kingdom of God. Each person must make their own decision. Jesus recognizes that people can & will reject the gospel.⁵

The inevitable reality, of course, was the disciples would be treated the same way Jesus had been treated (Mt 10:16–39). Even in His hometown of Nazareth, Jesus was compelled to leave because He was rejected by His former neighbors (Mk 6:1–6). The disciples would have to use discernment regarding how long they should stay in any one place. If the people rejected their message, they were to move on to another place.

If they’re welcomed into a home, they’re to stay there until they leave (Mt 10:11; Lk 9:4; 10:10). This reflects concern both for the motives of the disciples & the unity of the community. The natural tendency for the disciples would be to move up, accepting better & better accommodations from wealthier people. Such favoritism isn’t only sinful (Js 2:1–13), but could produce jealousy & disunity within the community. For the disciples themselves it could create a culture of greed & lack of dependence on God. Jesus next gives instructions if their message is rejected. **11**

This was a declaration that those who don’t welcome or listen to those Jesus sends are rejecting Jesus, not them. The disciples are to shake the dust off their feet as **a testimony against** those who reject the message of Jesus. This may be related to the Jewish tradition of shaking the dust of foreign lands off one’s garments when returning to the Holy Land. By doing so the disciples would be declaring the place of rejection to be pagan or defiled (Acts 13:51). It’s similar to what we read in Neh 5 when Nehemiah says,

I called the priests & took an oath from them that they would do according to this promise. I also shook out the front of my garment & said, “Thus may God shake out every man from his house & from his possessions who does not fulfill this promise; even thus may he be shaken out & emptied” (12b-13a).

⁵ Garland, p 250

That's what shaking the dust off the feet was saying: God is shaking you off of His feet as you've rejected the word that's come to you. There's no such thing as indifference to Jesus. You're for Him or against Him. There's no neutral ground. The gospel is a 2-edged sword. If we receive it, the benefit is eternal life. If we reject it fully & finally, we do so to our everlasting peril.

As the disciples fulfilled their responsibility to preach God's message, those who rejected it would have to answer to God. The word of God, which is able to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim 3:15), becomes a testimony against those who reject it. God's word will never return void (Is 55:11). It will be the fragrance of life for those who receive it by faith or it will be the stench of death for those who reject it.

The disciples will become a powerful force to change the world because they aren't acting on their authority, but in the power & authority of Jesus. This has an important application for us. Though the church today is far from perfect, as heirs of the great commission (Mt 28:18–20), we are the body of Christ, His hands & feet in the world (1 Cor 12:27; Eph 1:22–23; Col 1:24). We're jars of clay who've been filled with treasure, **so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God & not from ourselves** (2 Cor 4:7). Our task is simply to proclaim the message of salvation, that God takes sinners & transforms them into saints & that He's rescued us from the dominion of darkness & brought us to the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col 1:13).

3. Send (12-13) Jesus sent the disciples off & we read, **12**.

While the statement of commissioning in vs 7 mentioned casting out demons, it now becomes clear the disciples' mission involved preaching, casting out demons, & healing, the same activities Jesus had been performing. The content of the preaching is **that** people **should repent**. The disciples are replicating the key features of Jesus' ministry: preaching repentance, healing, & casting out demons. They faithfully & obediently carried out their call. Notice that though we were told about the authority that Jesus gave them to drive out demons (7), we see here the 1st thing they do is to preach, which was their primary task. They weren't sent merely on a healing crusade. They were heralds sent with a message to proclaim. They declared the message with authority; they weren't suggesting, asking, or begging. The message was being declared with authority. Remember when

Paul exhorts Timothy in 2 Tim 4:2? He says specifically, **Preach the Word!** That command is twofold. We are to **preach &** then he says what we're to preach: **the Word**. We don't proclaim our own ideas or thoughts but proclaim God's Word & do so with authority. Those that Jesus calls He sends to proclaim His truth. What is it the disciples are preaching? The text says they're preaching that people **should repent**. In doing this, they're following the example of John the Baptist & Jesus. John preached, **Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand** (Mt 3:2). Jesus begins His ministry preaching repentance. **Jesus began to preach & say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"** (Mt 4:17). Paul also preached the message of repentance throughout his travels. In Acts 17:30 Paul says, **having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent.** & in Acts 26:20, Paul is describing his whole ministry, & says, **declaring both to those of Damascus first, & *also* at Jerusalem & *then* throughout all the region of Judea, & *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent & turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.** Even though many think repentance is optional, Jesus insisted on the necessity of it. We see twice in Lk 13 Jesus plainly saying, **unless you repent, you will all likewise perish** (2, 5). The gospel message begins with a call to repentance. The gospel charge is to repent & believe, to turn from sin & turn toward God. You can't turn to God without turning from your sin.

Finally, we learn in **13**.

The disciples were given power to do what they couldn't possibly do themselves. They were powerless, but the God who gave them authority also gave them power to do what only God could do. The reference to **anointing with oil** as part of healing occurs only here in the gospels, & elsewhere only in Js 5:14–15. Oil was used medicinally (Is 1:6; Lk 10:34), but the oil here is more likely being used to represent the healing presence of God's Spirit. The disciples aren't functioning as doctors but as representatives of the reconciling power of the kingdom of God.⁶ It's never recorded in Scripture that Jesus anointed the sick with oil, yet the disciples did, at least on this occasion. The oil wasn't some magic potion but a symbol of the presence, grace, & power of the Holy Spirit. To anoint someone with oil was a physical sign of asking God to send His Spirit to come

⁶ Strauss, p 253

& heal.⁷ The disciples did as Jesus commanded. They preached & exercised His authority over demons & disease.

At this point in the narrative, Mark stops to focus on Herod's treatment of John the Baptist. Later in the chapter, however, he comes back to the ministry of the 12 & reports on their return (30). As they came back, they reported to Jesus **all that they had done & taught**. Like every follower of Jesus, they welcomed being accountable to the Lord for what they said & did on His behalf (2 Cor 5:10; Heb 13:17).

If you're a Christian, Jesus has called you, authorized you, given you the instructions you need, & has sent you out as His representatives. But we don't go alone. He's promised as we go that, **I am with you always, even to the end of the age** (Mt 28:20). & so we, as children of God, must go in the strength He gives, in the power of the Holy Spirit, & shine the light of Jesus in this dark world as we proclaim what He has done for us.

Here are a few principles we can learn from this passage:

1) Cultivate a simple lifestyle to avoid becoming enamored by the things of this world. The Bible is full of warnings about the dangers of wealth & the hoarding of possessions which distract us from God's purpose in the world (Prov 23:5; Mt 6:19; Mk 4:19; Lk 6:24–25; 16:13–15, 19–31; 18:18–25; 1 Tim 6:10, 17; Heb 13:5; Js 5:1–6; 1 Pt 1:18). A lifestyle that focuses on basic needs is among the greatest of challenges for us as Christians in the West, where we face the constant temptation to acquire more & more possessions & to be distracted from things that truly count for eternity. Our treasure is to be in heaven, not here (Mt 6:19–20). & God is faithful to provide for our needs.

2) We should depend on God rather than on our own talents or resources. The command for the disciples not to bring provisions required constant trust in God for their next meal & place to stay. similarly Paul speaks to the Philippians about the contentment he learned in any & all circumstances, knowing that **I can do all things through Him who strengthens me** & that **my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus** (Phil 4:13, 19). We experience the presence & power of God most fully in times of need, when we're forced to trust

⁷ William Hendriksen & Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark*, vol 10, NT Commentary,

Him. The testing of our faith produces spiritual maturity (Rom 5:3–5; Jas 1:2–4), & when we're weak in our own power, that's when we're strong in God's power (1 Cor 12:10). This doesn't mean that missionaries today shouldn't plan carefully, work out a budget, & raise financial support to meet their needs. No, Jesus elsewhere encourages His followers to plan ahead, weigh the cost, & use their resources wisely (Mt 25:14–30; Lk 14:28–33; 16:1–12; 19:12–27). Yet in doing so, they should always 1st place their trust & confidence in God.

3) The command to stay in one home in each town is a reminder that we aren't to show partiality. We're to treat others equally, regardless of social status, ethnic identity, wealth, or influence. We live in a celebrity culture & there's a strong tendency to give special favor & attention to the wealthy, famous, & those with political influence. Scripture warns against such favoritism (Jas 2:1–7) since all people are equal in the body of Christ. Jesus' own compassion & attention given to sinners (Mk 2:15), outcasts (5:30; 7:24–30), children (10:13–16), & the poor (10:46; 12:42) gives us a model to follow.

The Italian patriot, Giuseppe Garibaldi, was standing on the steps of St Peter's Basilica in Rome, & said to the men gathered around him, *I offer neither pay, nor quarters, nor provisions; I offer hunger, thirst, forced marches, battles & death. Let him who loves his country with his heart & not with his lips only, follow me.*⁸ Jesus similarly says to us today, **If anyone wishes to come after Me,**

he must deny himself, & take up his cross & follow Me (Mk 8:34). Jesus has called you so that He might send you out. It won't be easy but He will provide & bless you in your obedience to Him.

PRAY/men come for communion

We can't do what the disciples did in many respects, but we are to serve the Lord by His power as they did. Jesus came from heaven & was born a human, He lived sinlessly, died on the cross, was buried, rose again, went back to heaven & sent the Holy Spirit to empower us to do what He commands us. Why has He called us to Him? To send us out to **make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & the Son & the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you...** (Mt 28:19-20). We're to teach them to observe what Jesus commanded.

⁸ <https://www.ipl.org/essay/Guiseppe-Garibaldi-Analysis-FK7SNFH4SCF6>

Do you see communion there? As Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples, He gave new meaning to some of the items used at that meal. He took a piece of bread & a cup of wine & gave each new significance. He took the bread, blessed it, broke it into pieces, & instructed His disciples, **Take, eat; this is My body** (Mt 26:26). Then He took one of the cups of wine & after praying, He passed it & said, **Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins** (Mt 26:27-28). Paul tells us they were also told to **do this in remembrance of Jesus** (1 Cor 11:24). Paul then says, **For as often as you eat this bread & drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes** (1 Cor 11:26). Communion & the Great Commission go together. Every time we take communion we're teaching, telling, sharing, & being a witness to the gospel story of Jesus & His death & resurrection for us. By our eating of a little piece of unleavened bread & drinking a small cup of juice we're proclaiming the truth about God & the gracious story of the good news of Jesus. We speak boldly of His body that was broken & His precious blood that was shed for the forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus says He has sent us just as the Father has sent Him; but what does He mean? How has the Father sent Him? In Jn 3:16 we're told that Jesus was sent in love to save sinners. He came to earth & entered into our mess to love sacrificially so that we could be saved. He came not **to be served, but to serve, & to give His life a ransom for many...** (Mk 10:45). We remember Him as we come to the table today. PRAY/PASS

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; & when He had given thanks, He broke it & said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor 11:23-24).

Eat of bread thanking God for our salvation through His Son & proclaiming the gospel by doing so.

In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread & drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor 11:25-26).

Drink of the cup thanking God for our salvation through His Son & proclaiming the gospel **until He comes.**