

# **Sending Out the Twelve -- Mark 6:7-13**

by Travis Dean

November 6, 2010

Please bow your heads with me for prayer:

“Father, we are about to open Your Word. We believe it has been supernaturally inspired. So we also believe that it has the ability to supernaturally change us. According to the faith in our hearts may it be so. We ask this in Jesus’ name, amen.

I remember the last evening I spent in our house in Tennessee. My wife, Cesilia, and our children had left for Ohio in the afternoon. All of our furniture and most of our belongings were packed in the U-haul truck. I remember distinctly how empty the house felt. It seemed so big. With no family and no furniture I felt alone. The place seemed deathly silent - no screaming, running children; just an empty, lonely shell.

In our story today Jesus is left alone. For the first time since He chose them His twelve companions are gone. As we continue our journey through the book of Mark, let’s begin by reading together a summary of today’s story:

Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and prepared to send them out on their own. He gave them detailed instructions such as what to take with them, how to get started, and how to respond to rejection. As the twelve went out, they preached, cast out demons, and healed the sick.

Let’s now consider what Jesus experienced in this story. First of all, He experienced summoning and sending. In Mark 6:7 it says Jesus “called the twelve”. Instead of referring to them as His disciples, Mark calls them “the twelve”. A distinction is made between those who followed Jesus and this inner group of followers. Jesus had chosen these twelve men about six months before our story today. I invite you to turn with me to Mark 3:13-15 (Read). Mark says Jesus “called to Him” these twelve men. He summoned them when He chose them and now He summons them once again as He prepares to send them out. Mark says in Mark 3:15 that the reason He chose them is so that He might send them out. This is what He has been leading up to all along – so that they might perform the same ministry Jesus has been doing, namely, preaching casting out demons and healing the sick (Mark 3:14, 15). For the last six months the twelve disciples had not worked any miracles or taught publicly. They had simply been assisting Jesus. They had learned much by observing Him in action.

In Mark 6:7 it also mentions that Jesus sent them out “two by two”. Please turn with me to Matthew 10:2-4. Here Matthew lists the names of the twelve disciples. Mark has already mentioned their names back in chapter 3. That was when Jesus chose the twelve. But Matthew gives his list when Jesus is sending out the twelve. Notice how he groups the disciples in two’s (Read). Notice how each pair of disciples is connected with the word “and”. Most likely this list reveals how Jesus paired them off when He sent them out. He sent brother with brother and friend with friend, a strong personality with a mild personality. Jesus’ selections were not random, but intentional, based on strengths and weaknesses, as well as companionship.

Second, Jesus experienced giving instructions. His first instructions involve what to take. In Mark 3:8, 9 He says the need to take a staff and strap on a pair of sandals. These were basic gear for traveling. Then Jesus also mentions what they should not take: food, copper, or extra clothes. Those they ministered to would be expected to provide the food. Copper was a term used to describe money. Jesus said, “Don’t put any in a money pouch or tuck any in your belts.” All their needs would be provided for from those they taught. An extra “tunic” or inner garment was likewise unnecessary. Instead they were to dress like the people they were serving – poor village folk. One set of clothes was all they had. Jesus then gave them instructions on how to

begin. In verse 10 of Mark chapter 3 Jesus told them to "enter a house". They were not to go to the synagogue. Their labors were to take place in a house. Jesus also told them that once they were settled in a house, where they had been welcomed, that they were to "stay there". They were not to go from house to house being entertained. This would only take time away from their labors.

Then Jesus also clarified what they were supposed to do. First, they were to preach repentance. As we read in Mark 1:4, 15, this was the same message that John and Jesus gave. They called people to make way for the kingdom of God to be established in their hearts. Jesus also instructed them to cast out demons and heal the sick. Both of these ministries had repeatedly been done by Jesus. So, in essence, they were to duplicate Jesus' ministry, except now it would be multiplied. Mark mentions they anointed the sick with oil. This would have been olive oil in that region. And as you may remember from the story of the Good Samaritan, oil was used for medicinal purposes. This Samaritan man poured oil on the wounds of the man who had been robbed. Last, Jesus instructed the twelve how to respond to rejection. In Mark 6:11 He tells them, "shake off the dust under your feet." This symbolic act was meant to send a solemn message to those who did not welcome the ministry of the twelve. It was to recall in their minds the great Day of Judgment. Jesus refers to the cities of "Sodom and Gomorrah". The story of their destruction is given in Genesis 18 and 19. Their destruction had been brought upon them by God because of their wickedness. Sometime you may want to read Ezekiel 16:49, 50, where God mentions the specific reasons why He destroyed them. Thereafter their destruction symbolized the destruction that would take place in the Day of Judgment at the end of time.

Now that we have looked at what Jesus experienced in our story today, let's consider how Jesus is revealed as our example. This story has been recorded for our instruction. It has been preserved so that we might know what it means to be a healthy and dangerous Christian in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. First, Jesus is revealed as our example in that He sent the Twelve out on their own. Jesus had been training them for about six months. He had been modeling what He wanted them to do and become. The time came when they were ready to be graduated to their next level in training. They still needed a lot of help. They had a long way to go. And yet Jesus knew they were ready. He knew they needed to work on their own. So He sent them out, trusting them to be His representatives. Everything they would do would be in His name.

And so He reveals that a healthy and dangerous Christian is someone who is willing to take a risk with people. I remember my parents teaching me how to drive. I remember learning to drive a Chevrolet Chevette that my parents had at the time. For a while they were in the passenger seat. But then the time came where they realized it was time to "send me out". It was time for me to be out on my own. In doing so they took somewhat of a risk. I might crash the vehicle. But because they wanted me to be able to drive, they took the risk. And Jesus shows in our story today that a healthy Christian realizes it's not about me; it's about the mission. The mission to take the gospel to the whole world will never be accomplished if the leaders in the church don't take risks. If I always do everything myself because I can do it better, then the church will die. Those who are new and inexperienced in the church need to be trusted. They need to be sent out to experience for themselves what we as leaders have experienced.

Second, Jesus is revealed as our example in that He sent the Twelve out two by two. He sent each disciple with a partner. They always had someone to encourage and be encouraged by. Every morning and evening they could pray with and for each other. When one was down, the other could help him up. When one felt weak, the other could strengthen his faith.

And so Jesus reveals that a healthy and dangerous Christian is someone who seeks a companion in ministry. Often this ministry partner can be your spouse. For others it can be a friend of the same gender. But a healthy

Christian realizes that I am not complete on my own. I need the gifts, talents, and strength of a fellow Christian each day. Even Paul had companions in his ministry. As a Christian, he was apparently without the support of a wife. In his personality was very independent and self-motivated. And yet he needed Barnabas. Later he would choose Silas as his companion. Luke, Timothy, and Mark were all Paul's partners at some point in his ministry. I learned firsthand the blessing of a partner in ministry while I was at La Vida Mission. I was pastoring there at the time, alone. Then Sean came as a Bible worker. My most enjoyable ministry came as I worked side by side with Sean. To this day Sean is one of my best friends. A healthy Christian is not a lone ranger. A healthy and dangerous Christian is someone who seeks out and prays for a partner in ministry.

I felt lonely in our empty house in Tennessee. Jesus was left alone as He sent out His twelve disciples. But I don't believe He felt the same way I did, even though His closest companions were gone. The reason I believe this is because He was not self-oriented. He was kingdom-oriented. As He sent the Twelve out He was excited: "They're doing it! They're expanding the kingdom on their own! They're experiencing the Holy Spirit's power flowing through THEM, using THEM to work miracles!"

Are you kingdom-oriented? The all-important purpose for my life is to expand the kingdom of God. If I'm building houses, but not preparing people for heaven, my life has no eternal significance. When I get to heaven God's not going to ask me how many cars I sold. What did you do to bless someone else's life? How many people did you pronounce a blessing on? I might help someone live a few years longer, but have I effected anyone's eternity? I might not be rich or famous, but if I am using my life to expand God's kingdom, then I am making a difference for eternity.

What thrills your soul? A good football game? Eating out at your favorite restaurant? How about seeing someone set free by Jesus? How about helping someone grow in the Lord? It doesn't get any better than that. I invite you to turn with me to the song, "All that thrills my soul is Jesus". Please stand as we sing it together.