

Homily on Mark 6,7-13

July 12, 2018

Intro: Earlier in Mark's gospel Jesus had chosen 12 apostles, who had a two-fold purpose: 1) they were to be with him, to be companions who would learn from him, and 2) they were to be sent out to have his authority to preach and to drive out demons. In today's gospel, they are actually sent out to exercise that mission.

Matt 6: Who were these 12 and how were they to do their work?

In the first place, we know very little about these 12. Four of them were fishermen from the Sea of Galilee. Matthew is identified as a customs officer, one of them was a zealot, oriented towards armed rebellion against Rome. Judas is described as their money, but not reliable. In short, none of them was described as particularly well educated in the Bible or connected with the official Jewish religion. It is an unlikely crew.

Yet they exercised a remarkably fruitful ministry. They went out to preach repentance. They exorcised many demons. They anointed with oil many who were sick, and, in fact, healed them. Remarkable! How did such a motley crew do this? They didn't: it was the grace of their companionship with Jesus that did this. It was by their faithful acting on Jesus' authority and according to his instructions that they did this. How so?

The gospel tells us: they went out in pairs, in company to confirm one another. They took no provisions for themselves: no food for their journey, no sack for any sundries or clothes, not even a second shirt to change for their sweat-drenched ones, no money for any needs. All they have is their sandals and their walking stick. In short, they set out in faith---faith that Jesus's authority would empower them, and faith that their message and healings would be so powerful that they would be given food, shelter, and a chance to wash their shirt. Their faith allows God to accomplish these healings and find their way.

The Meaning for us:

We live in a consumerist society. The economy works when it gets us to be constantly desiring and buying things that are marginal in our lives. Christmas has become not a celebration of the poor Jesus in the manger, but of the glut of presents under the tree. And once we have these things, they take possession of us. Our streets and highways are filled with places which store things we will never again use, nor will our children; our closet are filled with clothes which we have not worn in years. We are led to be envious of the vacation that our neighbors take in Hawaii.

Less obvious, but even more insidious, is our insecurity about our future. Will we have enough to send our children to college? Will we be able to take care of our medical costs as they spiral out of control? Will we have enough to be able to retire? And to what?

Of course we must be cautious and prudent about our finances. But when we focus so exclusively on these things, we lose the faith that drove the apostles. Do you really think that God will provide for you if you have faith in God's care for you? Jesus tells us, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." How much time do you spend asking for the faith and trust in God that the apostles had?

But of course, they had Jesus in their midst, so it was easy to trust. Maybe, but remember that when the test came, when the guards seized Jesus, they all fled. They had not yet received the Pentecostal Spirit that enabled them to confront the powers of this world.

You have received that Holy Spirit, in baptism, and confirmation, and in your regular reception of the risen

Jesus Christ in Holy Communion. You can confront those powers.

So the real question is, "How vivid is your experience of Jesus in your lives?" Do you take time to get to know the Lord in your life? We have the opportunity to read the gospels daily in pamphlets like *Christ Among us* or *Magnificat*. Our bulletin gives us the daily readings which we can look up in our Bible and pray over. How much time do we take each day, not just to mutter set prayers, but to actually seek the Lord where he is to be found, in the Bible and in the events of our daily lives, in their ups and downs?

And beyond our personal commitments of time for the Lord, we must be mindful that Jesus sent his apostles out two by two. We need companionship on the way. We need to be with others who are basing their lives in the Lord Jesus. We need the companionship of other Christians who can tell us how they find Christ in their lives. That is what a parish is for---to provide the companions and space for this to happen.

I suggest you spend the rest of this month doing an inventory of your relationship with Jesus. And then spend August seeking in our parish and its ministries and other groups the companionship with Christ that you need. If you do not find what you are looking for, tell Veronica, our priests and deacons, our religious formation ministers what you need, so we can provide. **Jesus is your good news!**