

Mark 6:7-13

Pentecost 8; July 14 & 15, 2024

This little book has a lot of authority that goes along with it (passport). It is this book that says that I am a citizen of the United States of America. It is this book that says that as a citizen of the United States of America, I can travel to another country if they allow a US citizen to visit their country. Many of you are already aware that when we were on vacation last week, we spent 4 nights, with our camper, in Canada. When I pulled up to the border of Canada, and gave the Canadian Border agent this little book, she asked a few questions. Within a minute or two she said: *“Welcome to Canada.”* Why would this little carry so much authority? It is backed by the government of the United States of America. Otherwise, without that authority, I’m a nobody to the government of Canada. They don’t know who I am. With it, I am a citizen of the United States.

The disciples of Jesus had seen Jesus do some pretty amazing things. They had seen him drive demons out of people. Satan, himself, did not have any authority that was greater than Jesus. They had seen him heal diseases with just a word. Now Mark tells us: **“Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.”** Jesus says to them: *you know those demons that I have been able to drive out of people, you are going to be able to do it as well. You’ve seen me heal people. You are going to be able to do it now as well.* I wonder how the disciples thought?

I’m sure that at first, they may have been excited. They were going to be able to do things like Jesus. They couldn’t wait to pick and go out on their first missionary journey. But then, maybe reality began to hit them. As they may have thought about this more, they may have been a little more anxious or scared than excited. *Who were they to be able to do things like Jesus?* Look at this group of 12 men that had been following Jesus throughout the towns and villages of Galilee. A couple of them were fishermen. They knew how and where to throw the nets out to catch fish. But how are they going to throw the net of the Gospel to catch people’s souls? Matthew was a tax collector. You now how tax collectors were viewed by the people. They were known for ripping people off. Why would someone listen to him? Luke was a doctor. He knew one or two things about bandaging a wound. But how do you mend a broken soul with the Gospel?

Yet, in the grand scheme of things, they were nobodies. They were not any famous celebrity, prominent politician, or polished speakers. They were 12 everyday guys who didn’t even deserve to have their own sins forgiven. How are they going to go and preach and teach saying that other people’s sins are forgiven. They could never have imagined themselves to spokesmen like Isaiah, or King David, or even Amos. On whose authority are they going to tell people these things? Sharing this Gospel message is a pretty daunting task. It requires more than just a person’s natural gifts. Thankfully, Jesus equips those he sends. When he sent the Twelve out in pairs to preach in the villages of Galilee, he gave them authority for their missions. He **“gave them authority”** Mark writes. By his authority, they would speak Jesus’ words.

Yet, Jesus also knew the opposition that they would face. He knew that Satan would be relentless in attacking them. When we were on vacation, we were in northern Wisconsin, northern Minnesota, southern Ontario. In every site that we camped in, they had something that was common to all of them. Mosquitoes. They were also. With all the rain that they have had in those areas, it has made the waterfalls roaring. But those mosquitoes were awful. I don’t always like using Deep Woods Off spray. You had no other choice. They were relentless. As soon as you killed one, there were more to follow. Satan can be that way as well. As soon as one sin is knocked down, another one is right there to replace it. Jesus wanted his disciple to know that they could go out and tell people their sins were forgiven because they were doing it because of his authority.

Jesus gave them authority, but he also gave them some strange instructions. **“Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra shirt.”** Doesn’t that sound strange? When we were on vacation, we had all kinds of extra clothes along with us in our camper – extra jeans, long sleeve shirts, short sleeve shirts, extra socks, extra shoes. After all, you don’t know what weather you might be facing. It seemed that Jesus was telling them to take along with themselves – *daily bread*. We can understand why the disciples would want to be prepared for whatever that they may face.

He is not telling them that being prepared would be wrong. He is not telling them that having those extra things would not be bad as time would go on. In this case on their first missionary journey, Jesus wanted them to see that God would provide for them. There is an implication in these words that God would provide the resources that they would need. He wanted them to trust Him. **“Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.”** Jesus didn’t want any selfish ideas to get in the way of the work of spreading the Gospel. Jesus’ command to remain in one house in a given area seemed to be aimed at preventing selfish plans or efforts to improve the disciples’ living conditions. It goes back to trusting Jesus.

Yet, Jesus also knew that they would face opposition. **“And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”** Is Jesus telling his disciples to just give up on people? Is Jesus just writing people off? If that is true, it would seem to be against everything that Jesus had taught them. Sinners need a Savior. So, what is Jesus saying? He didn’t want them to make this big scene in front of everyone. He didn’t want them to yell and shout against them. He is telling them to just simply leave. By this simple action, they were giving a testimony against their rejection. In other words, Jesus is saying to them: *Leave the judging to the Judge – Jesus*. The point of the action was to serve as a preaching of the law.

“They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.” They went out and God blessed their efforts and many were welcomed into the kingdom of God. When we came back into the United States on last Sunday, I wasn’t sure what we would have to go through. Nine years ago, when we crossed the boarder there, we had our car searched. I wasn’t sure what was going to happen with a truck towing a camper. We came up to the US Boarder Patrol agent and gave him our passports. He had a few questions for us. He handed our passports back to us and with a smile on his face, he said: *“Welcome home.”* Imagine the sight that we will see someday when our savior smiles at us and says *welcome home*. That’s the authority Jesus gives his church to proclaim Jesus’ message of *“Welcome Home”* dear friend of Jesus. Amen.