

Sunday Lesson – July 4, 2021

GOSPEL: Mark 6: 1 - 13

Just a Carpenter

Background

“The stories of Jesus’ visit to his hometown and his commissioning of the twelve are two separate stories. The first story has to do with belief and unbelief. The second story has to do with the call of disciples and the proclamation of the Gospel. Both stories have to do with the acceptance or rejection of Christ or his representatives.” *(Excerpts from sermonwriter.com/biblical-commentary/new-testament-mark-61-13/)*

Insight

“Perhaps Jesus message was a little uncompromising, perhaps he spoke a few home truths with his message. Isn’t this just the repairman? As a carpenter Jesus would have spent most his time repairing furniture and buildings. There would have been new work also, but most of the work would have been wandering around town looking for things to repair, or buildings to help with. Carpenters also included general building work. So this guy is just the repairman – what right does he have to tell me how to live my life?”

There is a certain irony here. Jesus is the repair man. Both physically in his skill with wood, but also spiritually with his clear wisdom from God. Then there are the miracles, evidence that Jesus can and does repair people physically too. Yet despite the evidence that they have heard both on the grapevine and now with their own ears they still choose to reject him. We know now that Jesus is the ultimate repair man – putting the universe back together after it was ruined by sin.” *(Excerpts from sermoncentral.com/sermons/explaining-mark-6-1-13-peter-fisher-sermon-on-prophecy-136758)*



Gospel Reading

“He left there and returned to his hometown. His disciples came along. On the Sabbath, he gave a lecture in the meeting place. He stole the show, impressing everyone. “We had no idea he was this good!” they said. “How did he get so wise all of a sudden, get such ability?” But in the next breath they were cutting him down: “He’s just a carpenter—Mary’s boy. We’ve known him since he was a kid. We know his brothers, James, Justus, Jude, and Simon, and his sisters. Who does he think he is?” They tripped over what little they knew about him and fell, sprawling. And they never got any further. Jesus told them, “A prophet has little honor in his hometown, among his relatives, on the streets he played in as a child.” Jesus wasn’t able to do much of anything there—he laid hands on a few sick people and healed them, that’s all. He couldn’t get over their stubbornness. He left and made a circuit of the other villages, teaching. Jesus called the Twelve to him, and sent them out in pairs. He gave them authority and power to deal with the evil opposition. He sent them off with these instructions: “Don’t think you need a lot of extra equipment for this. *You* are the equipment. No special appeals for funds. Keep it simple. “And no luxury inns. Get a modest place and be content there until you leave. “If you’re not welcomed, not listened to, quietly withdraw. Don’t make a scene. Shrug your shoulders and be on your way.” Then they were on the road. They preached with joyful urgency that life can be radically different; right and left they sent the demons packing; they brought wellness to the sick, anointing their bodies, healing their spirits.” *The Message*

What It Could Mean?

“This week we have, on the one hand, two rather discreet stories from Jesus’ ministry that could easily be separated, yet together they form a really interesting, cohesive and, I think,

compelling narrative about how God acts in the world and what ministry in the name of Jesus looks like.

First, the story of Jesus in his hometown. Perhaps the reaction of Jesus' townsfolk shouldn't surprise us. Mark records that, because of their lack of belief, Jesus can do no acts of power (except to cure a few people which, of course, if you're one of those people cured is no small matter!). Why? While Mark doesn't answer this question, I wonder if it simply reflects that we are participants in God's work in the world to a degree far greater than we might imagine.

Think about it. Up until now, a dominant feature of all the stories Mark shares is the keen desire of those petitioning Jesus to be healed and restored. Yet in this story, all the bystanders can see if a local kid who's made it big and who, from the vantage point of scarcity and insecurity, has grown too big for his britches. Trapped in their comparisons and complaints, they are not remotely interested in receiving his blessing. Even Jesus cannot believe it.

Such a view makes space for the possibility that God actively enlists us in God's work. This creates the unfortunate, at times tragic, possibility for resistance, certainly, but it also invites our partnership and, in this way, hallows our daily activities and actions in the world. God *shares* God's ministry of reconciliation and healing with us, which means that each and every day we have before us the opportunity to be channels of grace and mercy to people and a world desperately in need of grace and mercy.

Read this way, this scene sets the stage for making sense of the second story as well, as Jesus equips and commissions his disciples to carry on his ministry. They are now, that is, partners in his ministry in a way they have not been up to this point in the story. Further, the instructions he offers demonstrate the mutuality, even interdependence, of his disciples on those to – and, as it turns out, *with* – whom they minister. They go out in

pairs – this work can't be done alone! – and they do not take their own provisions but rather depend on the hospitality of those they meet. And while some will receive them and be blessed, others will refuse their ministry and blessing.

We should remind people of how much their actions matter. Not as works that earn God's favor but as a response to God's holy invitation. God has chosen them in Baptism, you might remind them, not only for salvation but also for purposeful, consequential lives here and now, and that each day they have a choice between resisting God's activity and partnering with God's intent and action to bless and care for God's world. These stories, we might share with our folks, testify that our acts of kindness and compassion are holy and our moments of unkindness or indifference tragic. What we do matters, and once again this week God equips and commissions us to be agents of grace.” *(Excerpts from davidlose.net/2018/07/pentecost-7-b-gods-partners/)*

Readings for Further Study

- [Matthew 13: 54-57/Luke 4: 16-37/John 4:44](#) “*They were astonished/Prophet has no honor in his hometown*”
- [Matthew 10/Luke 9: 1-6](#) *The twelve harvest hands*

Thought for the Day

“In faith there is enough light for those who want to believe and enough shadows to blind those who don't.” ~ *Blaise Pascal*

A Prayer

Dear Lord, help me to understand that both belief and doubt are verbs and we can have intellectual doubts and intellectual unbelief, but still retain our faith. True belief and faith require us to be a hearer and doer. To truly doubt and disbelieve, we must have both thought and action. Lord, help me to be patient and understand that faith requires a season to grow. **Amen.** ~ *G.E. Roberts, from “Developing Christian Servant Leadership”*