

**Ordinary Men, Extraordinary Calling, Part 1**

Scripture: Mark 6:6–9

Code: 41-27

Now, for this morning, I want you to open the Word of God to Mark, chapter 6; Mark, chapter 6. For you that are visiting with us, we're working our way through the gospel of Mark, and having such a wonderful time doing it. Every Sunday morning when we come together, we spend time with our Lord Jesus as He is the theme of every paragraph; how enriching and wonderful it is. And this morning we come to a section that begins in verse 7 of chapter 6; Mark, chapter 6 and verse 7.

It has to do with the calling of the twelve, or the sending of the twelve, really, on a - on a sort of a short-term internship mission. It marks a very, very significant transition point in the life of our Lord, and is also highly instructive to all who minister the gospel. God's timing is always perfect, His providence never misses, and here we are at the beginning of a Shepherds Conference, and at a text that is most applicable to those who minister the Word of God and the gospel of Christ.

And we will look at this text, both this morning on the front end, and next Sunday we'll complete a look at it. It's really a very, very important text, and I want those of you in particular who minister to bear the wonderful implications and fruit of its riches. Now, just a word before I read it to you. Mark loves, I guess, what we've been calling sandwiches; a story with two sides and something else in the middle.

Now, we have seen that already just in the past chapter, in the case of starting out with the story of Jairus, ending up with the resurrection of Jairus' daughter from the dead, but in the middle, the wonderful account of Jesus healing the woman with the issue of blood. Well, here is another one of those kind of Mark-en sandwiches in which he begins with the apostles, and ends with the apostles, and drops in the middle the account of the horrible execution of the last of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist.

Now, for us to get the whole story of the sending of the twelve, then, we're going to take the beginning and the end, and leave the middle story of John the Baptist for the future. Let me read, then, the pertinent Scripture, beginning in the second half of verse 6 of chapter 6. "He was going around the villages teaching. And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits; and

He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff-- no bread, no bag, no money in their belt-- but to wear sandals; and He added, 'Do not put on two tunics.'

"And He said to them, 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.' They went out and preached that men should repent. And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them." Then comes the story of John, and we'll pick up our account in verse 30, at the return of the apostles from their short-term mission.

Verse 30: “The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. And He said to them, ‘Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.’ (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves.” In this very beautiful, very foundational act, in which our Lord sends out the twelve on their first preaching mission, we have essentially the seeds of ministry principles that come to full bloom in the rest of the New Testament, particularly in the book of Acts and in the epistles.

How we view ministry begins here. This is where we have the foundational beginning implications for the nature of ministry that is so important to all who teach the gospel. Here we see Jesus, the perfect leader, delegating His message and His power to the first generation of gospel preachers, His first representatives, namely, the twelve. Here is the start of what we know as church leadership and gospel ministry. The Lord delegates to chosen representatives, twelve of them, the responsibility of representing Him, of taking His preaching and His power to the villages and towns, and to the people of Galilee.

Now, some of the specifics in this account, obviously, are unique to the apostles; namely, the ability to do miracles. We don’t have those powers. But the general features that He required of them, He still requires of us. So, there is an awful lot implication in this passage. All good Bible exposition draws implications, implications that extend beyond the historical event in which the text was written, or the event which the text describes. So, we’re going to be looking for implications that go on permanently, insofar as responsibilities for those who minister.

As we work through the text, they will become clear to us. But let’s begin at the back half of verse 6, because that’s really where this section starts, and these words will get us going: “And He was going around the villages teaching.” The fact is the main word there is He; He was the only preacher. He was the only healer. He was the only one answering the questions of the masses. There wasn’t anybody else. His was an absolutely solitary, singular ministry. For well over half of the three years of His earthly ministry, He did it all.

He is past the halfway point now in His ministry. He is headed to the cross. There are only a few months left in the Galilee ministry. There were three tours of Galilee; He is about to launch the third and final one, in the winter of the next to the last year of His life on earth. Up to this point, He has done it all: all the preaching, all the teaching, all the healing, all the deliverance from demons, all the raising of the dead, He has done. Everybody, in order to experience His teaching and experience His power, had to be where He was.

That made the crowds larger, and larger, and larger, and the larger they got, the more limiting and confining they became, and the harder it was to get to everyone. Galilee, as I said, only has a little time. In chapter 10 of Mark, and verse 1, Jesus goes to Judea, where He spent the last year of His ministry, Judea being the southern portion of the land of Israel. Not much time left, only time for one brief Galilean tour. The pressure of time, the tremendously increasing crowds, make it clear to Him that He needs to divide the responsibility.

He can multiply Himself twelve times, if He will delegate the truth and delegate the power to the apostles and send them out, so that this final opportunity, this final gracious extension of ministry, is

vastly more pervasive, as they take up His place and His role from town to town and village to village. He has to diffuse the single nature of His ministry, diffuse the single crowd phenomenon, and take the message to the towns and villages in a multiplied fashion. It's time now for these men, who have been in training by being with Him, day after day, 24/7, for months, for no doubt well over a year.

They know what the message is. How do they know? They have heard it every day, repeated all through the day, day after day, week after week, month after month. And – and Jesus, as we know from the gospel record, told the same stories in different settings, made the same analogies, made the same points, calling people into His Kingdom of salvation; they knew the message. Best way to learn the message is to listen to the – the best teacher of the message. The best way to learn to preach is to listen to the Master preacher, and they have had their seminary training.

It's now time for them to go out on their first mission. And the objective is, go do it, and then come back, and we'll find out what you felt you were prepared for and what you felt you weren't prepared for, and we'll ramp up the teaching that's going to even make you better when you have to go out permanently in the near future. Now, Mark gives us the sequence as to what's going on. In chapter 5, the double miracle of raising Jairus' daughter from the dead, twelve-year-old daughter, and then healing the woman who for twelve years had been hemorrhaging.

Then Mark says after those monumental miracles near Capernaum, Jesus made a visit to Nazareth, 25 miles to the west and the south, which was His hometown. This is the second time He went to Nazareth. The first time they tried to kill Him after one sermon, because He indicted their false religion and their corrupt hearts, and told them that they were a generation like past generations, with whom God could do nothing because of their hard hearts. They didn't like the message; they tried to throw Him off a cliff and kill Him.

A long time has passed now in His Galilean ministry, and He returns, in the opening six verses of the chapter, to Nazareth. They don't try and kill Him, but they take offense at Him; cold, stone rejection in His hometown, by the people who knew Him best, the people He had lived with for 30 years of His life. He left Nazareth, and it was a sad and tragic leaving. It was so strange that verse 6 says, "He was amazed at their unbelief." That's a tragic reality. He couldn't do miracles there, except for a few, it tells us in verse 5, because of that unbelief.

He doesn't waste His miracles on hard hearts. They were now in the category of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, cursed cities in Israel, for having rejected the Messiah. Now, that was only a microcosm of the fact that the whole nation would be cursed, and fall under the horrors of the Roman invasion in A.D. 70. So, it is after His rejection at Nazareth that it says He was going around the villages, teaching. Villages where many time was short; grace was still going to be available as the Savior went from place, to place, to place, to place.

But with the constraints of time and the vastness of the opportunity, it's the perfect moment for Him to empower the twelve, and send them on an internship mission; which will make this extensive proclamation of the gospel even greater than anything He's been able to do in His first and second trip around Galilee. Remember, when He called the apostles, back in chapter 1, verse 17, He said that He would make them fishers of men? As many as seven of them were fishermen. Now was the time for them to begin fishing, to cast their nets.

So, in verse 7, it says, “He summoned the twelve and began to send them in pairs.” They had already been selected as twelve of His disciples that would be elevated to the level of preachers. He had many learners, many followers, some true, long-term followers, some false, short-term followers. But from among the true long-term followers, He chose twelve. There were more; there were more. Luke tells us, in the tenth chapter of Luke, that later on, He selected 70 more of His followers, and sent them out on a short-term mission, so He had a lot of disciples to choose from.

But twelve were elevated to be preachers; we know them as the apostles. They had four phases to their calling. First of all, there was a heart calling. There was the Spirit of God working in their heart, that drew them to follow Christ. They were interested in Christ from the very outset. There was nothing coming at them from Him; it was all the secret, quiet work of the Spirit of God in the heart. They were drawn to Christ. That was the first step. They began to believe in Him, to believe in Him as possibly the Messiah, teacher from God, the prophet from God, and they were drawn to Him.

Secondly, He then called them to follow Him permanently. He reached out to them, and said, “Come after Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” That’s the second phase. The third phase was He elevated these twelve to the level of preachers. They were not only called to Him, they were to be sent by Him, which is what apostle means, a sent one. They then were going to be transitioning from being students to being preachers, from being learners to being messengers. Well, here is the fourth feature in their preparation, their first mission trip as interns.

There will be a fifth phase; that will be the final sending, which happens after His death and resurrection, when He meets them on the Mount of Olives and sends them to Judea, and Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth. So, here we are at point four in the preparation of the apostles, their short-term ministry where they go to represent the Lord Jesus, with His message and with His power, for a short time, to return and report to Him. And when they report to Him, they will then receive further training, based upon that report.

Finally, after all of their months and months of listening, it’s their time to repeat the message, and they are sent. “He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs.” They went in pairs for obvious reasons: mutual support, mutual protection, to make everything they said confirmed in the mouth of two witnesses, to blend their unique gifts and talents and skills, and to bring double witness to what they were going to repeat that they had heard and seen in Jesus. So, for all of those reasons, they went two-by-two.

And by the way, wherever the disciples are listed in the gospels or in the book of Acts, they always appear in twos. There are three groups of four; it’s always two and two, two and two, two and two, in all the listings, and that’s the way they functioned. They came back the same way they went out, two-by-two. The idea that He began to send them out may mean that they all didn’t go at the same moment, but that it was over a brief period of time that they were give direction as to where they were to go, and they were sent.

And they probably came back something the same way. It’s time now for them to set aside their mundane trades. It’s time for them to set aside their earthly vocations. They’ve had enough training, they had enough preparation, it’s now time to go. And so much is at stake; there is no second string. There is no backup team. There is no plan B. These are the men. Risky from a human perspective?

Yes, it is risky. We know them as twelve ordinary men with extraordinary responsibility. They are very special men to us, but they were not special to anybody in the religious establishment at the time they were chosen.

They are unique to us. We have them elevated in our hearts and minds, and rightly so. They had great positions. After the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the church, they were the ones who established doctrine. When the early church met in Acts 2:42, they studied the apostles' doctrine. They were the first generation of preachers, the first generation of missionaries. They established the churches. That is, they, minus Judas, plus Matthias, and with Paul added. The New Testament was essentially written by the apostles and their close associates.

So, this is where that all begins. One other important note here that you need to consider: there is also a judgment in the commissioning of the twelve, a very severe judgment in the commissioning of the twelve. Jesus was a judgment preacher. Many things He did were acts of judgment, and it wasn't just making a whip and cleansing the temple, once at the beginning of His ministry and once at the end. It wasn't just pronouncing doom on the Pharisees, judgment on the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, as He did in His passion week.

There were many elements in His ministry that were acts of divine judgment, sweeping acts of judgment, and this is one of them. This is a judgment on Israel; this is a judgment on the nation Israel. Israel was hardening in its unbelief, solidifying in its rejection of Him as Savior. And as we all know, by the time He comes out of the grave, there are only a hundred and twenty believers in Judea, and five hundred in Galilee. The nation had turned itself against Him, and rejected Him. What happened in Nazareth was a microcosm of what happened in the nation.

It's just really stunning to think about that. If you can imagine a nation, in a primitive time where there was no such thing as an accurate medical diagnosis, and therefore no such thing as a medical cure. In a time when demons were wreaking havoc in the souls of people. In a time when the battle for bread and survival was challenging and difficult. In a time when the mortality rates were higher, and life spans were lower, here was someone who could heal every disease, without discriminating against anybody.

He healed all the sick, all the time, everywhere He went. Here was somebody who could deliver someone from the horrendous oppression of demons. Here was someone who could raise the dead. Here was someone who could provide food for the hungry masses, and the number of them was no limitation whatsoever. And on top of that, here was someone who could show you the way to heaven. Now, ask yourself if that's the one you want to kill - really? So, you come down to the time when He stands before Pilate, and they bring Barabbas, and you want Barabbas, right?

And what did Barabbas ever do for you? He robbed you, and plundered you. This is to show you the depth of the animosity, the depth of depravity, the darkness of the human heart, the ugliness of wretched sin, and rejection of the truth, and to show you the terrible, damning evil of false religion. It's a stunning thing. But it's against the backdrop of that nation that He chooses twelve men. Guess what? No priest, no scribe, no Pharisee, no Sadducee, no rabbi; nobody out of the religious establishment is chosen. The religious establishment is corrupt.

The very fact that He chose these men from the commonest of people - most of them being

fishermen, the other common laborers - and you can throw in a despised tax collector, and a deadly terrorist in Simon the Zealot, and you've got a very unlikely group. It is a judgment on the condition of the religious establishment that He can't use anybody in the religious circles. This is a judgment on apostate Judaism. And that's how His ministry actually began.

As soon as He started His ministry, He went into Jerusalem - the capital of the great nation of Israel, the home ground of the religious establishment - during the Passover, the one time of year which was the high point of religion in Israel. He went in to the holy place that we know as the temple, the sacred place of Judaism, populated with masses of pilgrims coming to offer their sacrifices. This was when the religious establishment was at its pinnacle. And He made a whip and just cleaned the place out.

He struck a devastating blow at institutionalized and apostate Judaism. He unmasked the religious nobility as thieves and hypocrites. He condemned their spiritual bankruptcy. He exposed their apostasy. He rebuked their sinfulness. He indicted them for gross corruption, denounced their deception and essentially made it public, so that all the people knew what He thought about them. Now, many months later, at the height of the Galilean ministry, their hatred of Him has escalated. It started that day, and its escalated in all the months in between.

And these leaders of the religious establishment are making sure that every possible opportunity they have to convince the people that He is satanic and not from God, they take that opportunity. And so they continue to feed these corrupt, downright hypocritical religious people throughout the nation, the propaganda against Christ, and they buy it. They are bloodthirsty by the time we reach this point. The rejection is complete. They despised Him. They despised the doctrines of grace He stood for. They spurned the repentance He demanded.

They hated the message of forgiveness that He gave. They repudiated the faith that He demanded. And they overlooked all His miracles. All they wanted was a dead Jesus. When He chose twelve common, ordinary men to be the first generations of New Covenant preachers, that was a condemnation of the Jewish religious system. The twelve apostles became, in effect, the leaders of Israel. How many tribes in Israel? Twelve. Now you know why there were twelve apostles; not eight, not ten, not six, not twenty-four.

There's symbolic importance here. There were twelve tribes in Israel, but Israel was apostate. Its leaders were apostate; the Judaism of Jesus' time was a horrendous corruption of the faith of the Old Testament. Their religion was legalistic. It was self-condemned, shot through with hypocrisy and self-righteousness. And Jesus picked men who were not at all a part of it. They weren't even rulers in the synagogue, the local rulers. He elevated them. They were the new spiritual leadership of that nation.

Jesus Himself made the connection, in Luke 22:29 and 30. This is what He said to the apostles; He said to them, the twelve, "I bestow upon you a Kingdom, just as My Father bestowed upon Me; that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." "You are the new leaders of Israel, symbolized in the twelve, as there are twelve tribes. And one day in the glory of the Kingdom, each of you will rule over one of the tribes of Israel."

These are remarkable choices our Lord is making. But doesn't this fit the picture of 1 Corinthians, that He chooses not many noble, not many mighty; He chooses the lowly, and the nothings, and the

nobodies, so that all the glory may belong to Him? And having already pulled them out months ago, He now sends them out. And as they go, I want you to see the things that mark faithful messengers, okay? The features, characteristic elements of ministry, that mark faithful messengers of Christ. For those of us who are called to this high calling, this is a strong, strong foundational teaching.

First of all, number one: faithful messengers of Christ proclaim salvation; proclaim salvation. Does that seem obvious? Well, it should be obvious. We just have one message; just one message. I'm going to borrow from Luke 9. Luke is the parallel text - Matthew 10, Luke 9, have also this same sending out. And Luke 9 says this, "He sent them out" - verse 2 - "He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God." "He sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God." That's what John the Baptist did, that's what Jesus did. Jesus came to preach the Kingdom.

What does that mean? To preach the King and His subjects, the Kingdom of salvation. What is the Kingdom of God? It is the realm of salvation, it's the realm of the redeemed and the saved, over which God rules through His chosen monarch, Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of lords. It's the message of salvation. The word proclaim here is *kērussō* - it's the word preach; it's the word preach. They went out to herald publicly, to go into the towns and the villages publicly, to preach the Kingdom of God; that you could come into the sphere where God rules.

You could enter into His Kingdom of blessing, and promise, and hope, and deliverance, and salvation. They had been learners; they are now messengers. They had been students; they are now preachers. This is their first foray into this. And they were going to do exactly what Jesus did. If you go back in Mark, chapter 1, He was preaching the Kingdom; simply that the sphere of salvation is now available. The door is opened. "If you'll come and put your trust in Me, you can enter the Kingdom of salvation, and be under the beneficent, and eternal, and blessed rule of God. But you have to acknowledge Me as your Lord."

Then, in verse 12, there's a second component added in their message. Verse 12 says, "They went out and preached that men should repent." That, too, was a part of the message of Jesus, as well as John the Baptist: repent. That was the message that Israel couldn't swallow, because that affirms that they are poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed, as Jesus designated them in Luke, chapter 4, borrowing from Isaiah 61; that the gospel was going to be preached to the poor, prisoners, blind, and oppressed.

It's not talking about physical conditions; it's talking about heart conditions. To those who realize they are spiritually bankrupt, who realize they're in prison to sin and death and judgment, who are blind to spiritual truth, and who are under the oppressive threat of punishment. The gospel comes to those who recognize their horrendous spiritual condition, the deadly wrath of God about to fall on their heads. And the gospel says, "Repent; recognize your religious sins, your hypocrisy." That's what Jesus preached. That's what John preached.

That's what they preached. That's what we preach. We preach that sinners must repent, put their faith in Jesus Christ, to enter in to the Kingdom of God, wherein lies eternal salvation and eternal blessing, under the sovereign rule of God. The Kingdom is opened up, and Matthew 10 says He told them, "Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "Go to these lost sheep. They're in the house of Israel; they are lost. They're no different than pagans." And so, they went, doing what Jesus did. The implication is pretty clear for us, right?

We only have one message to give. We only have one source. We have one book, with one gospel. Any deviation from that is a prostitution of our ministry. We preach the message of salvation. The second thing they did - very important and all faithful ministers of the gospel, all faithful messengers of Christ, do it - they manifest compassion; they manifest compassion. Verse 7, back to verse 7: "He gave them authority over the unclean spirits." Now, obviously, there's more than compassion here; that is an expression of divine power.

But compare that with down in verse 13: "They were casting out many demons and anointing with oil many sick people and healing them." Our Lord gave them exousia - the word authority. Exousia can be translated authority, if you're talking about the right to do it; it can be translated power if you're talking about the ability to do it. They had both the right to declare unclean spirits to be gone, they also had the ability to do it. That's exousia, both the right and the power. By the way, He delegates to the twelve power over demons.

How extensive? Luke 9:1 says they had power over all demons; all demons. There were no demons, either in groups or alone, who could withstand this power. Now, why is this the first thing that is described here? Because this is the greatest expression of power. Not healing; not healing, because disease doesn't fight back. Disease in itself is not a personal power. It can't devise means to thwart the efforts of the healer. Even death is not in itself a power, that fights to thwart the one who would break its bands.

Demons? They are personal powers, massive powers, supernatural powers, and so, the inability to dominate all demons is, in some ways, the greatest expression of power, because at that point, you get the greatest resistance. He gave them, then, power to dominate the unclean spirits, and, Luke 9:1 says, "to heal diseases," and Matthew 10:8, the other comparative passage, says - get this: "raise the dead"; "raise the dead." So, what did they do? Twelve men went out to cast out unclean spirits, heal all the sick, and raise the dead.

Staggering, staggering commission. They had all the power Jesus did, over demons, disease, and death. These were the credentials of the apostles, the agents of our Lord Jesus Christ. They had these for the duration of their ministry. Second Corinthians 12:12 says these are the signs of the apostles: "signs, wonders and various miracles." Those were the unique credentials of the apostles. The only time any other people received such abilities, Luke records, in Luke 10, that for a short time, He sent out 70 other of His disciples.

Seventy others, to go out and preach the Kingdom, and He gave them that kind of power. It's an interesting thing; why 70? Well, it may be that He was connecting with Moses; you remember, in the Old Testament, when Moses was appointed to his position of leadership, he chose 70 elders to spread the work. But apparently the 70 only had that power for a very brief, delegated period, whereas the twelve had it as a permanent indication of their apostleship. Why would they have those signs?

Because that's what makes it clear that they are speaking divine truth. It's undergirded by these powerful expressions of miracles. But as I've said before, there's more to it than the power. There's the compassion in it, because there were many ways that Jesus could have chosen to demonstrate power; many, many ways. In fact, the Pharisees held out, to the dying end, that Jesus did not verify



that He was the Messiah, because He did not do signs in the heavens. He didn't rearrange the constellations, with which they were so very familiar.

He didn't turn the night into daylight, or the daylight into night. He didn't do things to the sun and the moon that the prophets talked about. So, they held out at the very end, saying, "Show us a sign," and what they wanted was a sign from heaven. He could have done all of that. He could have done anything. Why - why these things? Why dealing with demons, and disease, and death? Because you not only demonstrate power, but the demonstration of compassion is overwhelming. Without discrimination, He heals everybody, delivers everybody from diseases, raises dead people.

Understand, this is a very primitive world, where these things were daily realities that inflicted pain on these people, and there was no relief; no relief. The compassion is stunning; it is stunning. There was a little community of Jews somewhere - we don't know where - to whom the writer of Hebrews wrote his great epistle, and he says to them, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation; which was, first of all, spoken by our Lord, and then to us by those who heard Him?" And he goes on to say, in Hebrews 2:4, "And they verified it, with signs and wonders, and various deeds, under the power of the Holy Spirit."

Maybe that little group of believing Jews was a town that one of the twelve visited. Whoever they were, they heard from the apostles, and what they heard was verified by mighty, mighty miracles. Supernatural power, then, is to authenticate the message, but I think, beyond that, it is to demonstrate the compassion of God, as over against false teachers. Listen, do you think the people of Israel felt that their religious establishment was compassionate? I don't think so. Jesus indicted them and said, "You bind on these people burdens they can't even carry, and you don't even lift a finger to lighten the load."

They had turned the Sabbath day - a day that was supposed to be a day of rest - into the most hated day of the week, because there were so many prescriptions, people could barely do anything. They had added so many laws, and rituals, and routines, and demands, and commands, that all of life was externally cumbersome. They were extracting money out of people to such a degree that even a poor widow threw her last two cents in the treasury in the temple, and went home to die. And Jesus said, "Any religion that does that to a poor widow, is coming down stone, by stone, by stone, to nothing."

False teachers oppress people, Ezekiel says. He says they vex people. Amos says they sell people for any price they can get. Amos says they defraud people. Amos says they crush people. Isaiah says they grind their faces. Habakkuk says they devour people. Jeremiah says they eat people up, they consume them. Jesus later, in Mark 12:38 to 40, says false teachers take advantage of widows; they literally take away their houses. That's the kind of system they were living in: a crushing, merciless system.

And it was even to the extent where, if you were a Pharisee, you were proud to say, "I don't go near the am ha'aretz", I don't go near the common people. No, not even so much as to teach them the law of God, they're so far beneath me." Here comes Christ. Where is He all the time? Among the people. Among the people, in the mass, in the crowd, and He's putting God on display, the God who doesn't forget their suffering, Psalm 9. The God who hears their cries, Psalm 69. The God who maintains their rights, Psalm 140.

The God who delivers, protects, exalts, and provides, for all who suffer, and all who are poor. Psalm 14 says that He is our refuge. Mark it: false teachers are merciless, brutal, compassionless. They abuse people. They take advantage of people. They divest widows - or anybody else - of their last dime, if they can. On the contrary, our Lord is sympathetic, tender, drawn to the poor, drawn to the sick, drawn to the demon-possessed, drawn to the funerals, to relieve suffering.

Our Lord sent the twelve to do the same thing that He had done, in order to demonstrate that God is a God of love, and mercy, and compassion, and kindness, and tenderness, and He feels your pain. And so, anybody who names the name of Christ, anybody who proclaims that he is a servant of Christ, anybody who goes as the messenger of Christ, must, first, proclaim salvation, and secondly, show compassion. And true ministers do. They proclaim salvation, they manifest compassion.

One more point, they live dependently; they live dependently. These first preachers set the model for us, verses 8 and 9: "and He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff-- no bread, no bag, no money in their belt-- but to wear sandals; and He added, 'Do not put on two tunics.'" Now, here are the rules for the road, folks. Okay, you guys, you're going to go. Matthew adds that He said this: "Freely you've received, freely give."

Don't put a price on your ministry. This is the principle of never charging for the gospel, never charging for the ministry, not seeking to be enriched by people, especially by taking from suffering people - which is so common among false teachers. The Bible, all the way from the oldest books in the Old Testament that mention false teaching, to the New Testament, tell us false teachers all are in it for the money. They get rich off people who suffer. And listen, sick and suffering people will pay anything to someone they think can help them.

People trade on that all the time, these would-be healers all over the place who have become filthy rich can't heal anybody; they can't heal anybody. But people will pay out of desperation. Can you imagine what they would pay if you could? Well, the twelve had to face that reality. They would raise the dead, and they would heal all the sick, and they would deliver all the people possessed by demons, and the temptation would be to cash in on it. That's not how it's going to be. "Freely you received," He said to them, in Matthew 10, "freely you give."

And then, that's what Peter's talking about; he learned the lesson well. He talks, in 1 Peter 5, about people in the ministry for filthy lucre's sake. Timothy is told by Paul to beware of the love of money, which is the root of all kinds of evil. People who love it pierce themselves through with many, many sorrows. Paul says, "Look, you have a right to be paid" - "Those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel" - 1 Corinthians 9. You know, you need to feed the ox if you want him to plow.

Paul, in Galatians, says to share with the one who teaches you in all good things. Nothing wrong with that. But here, this is a training mission, okay? This is a training mission, and what's the lesson here? There's multiple lessons. One: you're going to have My power with you. You're going to preach My message. But you're going to have to learn to trust in Me for everything. This is a - this is training in trust, okay? This is training in trust. This is your - this is your greatest lesson on the great theological truth of divine providence.

You're going to learn that God will provide. By the way, everything that is mentioned here - that you

just sort of grab and go - you don't take an extra pair of sandals, you don't take an extra tunic - we'll see - you don't take an extra staff - these kinds of things were the normal things that you packed to leave. All of them are mentioned in Exodus 12:11. When the people were ready to leave Egypt, they had to go light; you have the same things mentioned there. They were leaving a pagan land, and they were going to leave everything behind, and just take what they had in their hand and on their back; and it's the same thing here.

And I think, maybe, there's something kind of interesting in that. Could this be a small sign of the beginning of a new era in redemptive history? Is this a new exodus, from a pagan Israel? Is this the gathering of a new nation, and these are the leaders of that new nation? So, when you go, he says, "taking nothing, packing nothing except a mere staff" - a mere staff - that's a walking stick, and a stick you could use to defend yourself against an attack of a robber, or some kind of an animal.

In Luke 9, it says, "neither a staff", which obviously means an extra one. People tended to take an extra one, sometimes over the shoulder with a bag on it. You don't take an extra staff. And then he goes on to say, "No bread" - no food; no food, and you're going to learn to depend on Me - "no bag", which means you've got nothing to carry the food in anyway - that's a backpack or a knapsack. "No money in your belt" - they carried money in their belt. Matthew 10:9, Jesus also said, "And don't acquire gold, and don't acquire silver, and don't acquire copper for your money belt."

Don't start selling your healing power. Take no money, take no extra clothing, take no bag to put anything in; you just go. This is, dear friends, high-level training in trust, isn't it? Wow. And "don't take two tunics". A tunic is translated, in Matthew 5:40, shirt. Outwardly they had a cloak, which they used as a blanket, and to roll up and sleep on at night - or unroll. Don't take an extra shirt; just what you've got. This is the stripping of every normal thing that you would assume you would need to pack an extra pair. Don't take a second pair of sandals also, the other writers say.

Now, you say, "Wow, this - is this the vow of poverty forever?" Are you feeling a little guilty as you think about the four suits you brought to the Pastors' Conference this week? Three pairs of shoes - I feel your pain, I want to help you. Turn to Luke 22; Luke 22:35. "He said to them" - this is the look back - "When I sent you out" - "you remember that, guys?" - He's talking to the twelve. Remember "when I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you didn't lack anything, did you?" What did they say?

"No, nothing." Did they learn the lesson? Did they learn the lesson of providence? Did they learn that you can live dependently? Is that forever? Is that supposed to be the way you live your entire life? No. But isn't it good to know that God will provide? 'Cause there are going to be times, and there have been times, in all our lives, when we were in one degree of desperation or another, wondering where in the world we were going to be able to get what we needed to make it. "But now" - He says in verse 36 - "But now" - now is different than then, okay?

"But now, whoever has a money belt take it along, likewise a bag" - which assumes you can fill it up and pack it up - "and whoever has no sword then sell one of your coats and get a sword." It's not going to be easy out there. You may have to kill your food. You may have to defend yourself against an enemy. You're going to need supplies. This is the normal thing. Plan, prepare, accept what God has provided, pack it up, do what you're going to do. But for those twelve then, the lesson was on dependence.

Go, like the rabbis said that people were to go to the temple: with no staff, no shoes, and no money. Go, sort of symbolically bare before God. This is boot camp on trust. Had they heard Jesus say - had they heard Him say that "if He clothes the lily of the field, He'll clothe you?" Sure. Had they heard Him say, "If He feeds the birds of the air, He'll feed you?" Had they heard Jesus say, "Be anxious for nothing? Seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness, and everything else is going to be added."

They learned their lesson on trust when they responded, "No, nothing. We had all the food we needed. We had all the lodging we needed. We had everything we needed the whole trip. We had nothing in our hand but the stick when we left, and we had all our needs met." One of the great lessons for all of us in ministry to learn is dependence. That's what we try to teach the seminary students while they're here. Keep them as poor as possible for as long as possible, so somewhere down the road, when they have to apply that lesson of trust, it's going to be there in their memory bank.

Well, if you want to be a messenger that stands in the long line of faithful messengers descending down from the apostles, proclaim salvation, manifest compassion, and live dependently. Don't put a price on your ministry. Receive everything God gives you with grace and gratitude, hold it lightly in your hand, and use it for the advance of the Kingdom. Well, there's three more principles here, that we'll look at next Sunday. Thank You, Father, for such a wonderful and refreshing time with our Lord again.

His wisdom is so overwhelming to us. Every scene like this is precious, precious to us, a precious experience of communion, and fellowship with Him, and with You. Thank You for enlightening us today in a new way, and especially those who are those ordinary men called to this extraordinary calling today. We bring the same message. We bring promise of the same power. We can tell them that someday, Jesus will heal all their diseases; that He will raise them from the grave to eternal glory, eternal bliss.

Father, we thank You that we can validate our ministry, not by miracles, but by its accordance with holy Scripture. There's the proof of its validity. We thank You, Lord, for all that You're doing in our lives, even in this hour, to remind us, to reshape us, to refocus us, to give us a greater love, even as we heard sung, More love to Thee. That's our prayer. And now, Lord, we know there are people with spiritual needs. Some need Christ; they need forgiveness of sin and salvation.

Some need to confess sin, to seek a real heart-cleansing, to pick themselves up by Your power and walk in the way, faithfully. Some need help with relationships and life. Some homes and marriages need help. And we pray that Your Holy Spirit would come in mighty power in those situations. There are folks who need to be a part of the church, who need to step out of their anonymity and join the church, and make public confession of faith in baptism openly, before the world, their love for You.

We pray, Lord, that you would prompt every heart in all those areas, so that we might be obedient, and mostly, that we might adorn the truth about You in the way we live; to Your glory we pray. Amen.

END

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