

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE

Mark 6:1-29

Key Verse: 6:7

"Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits."

Today's passage focuses on the disciples' fieldwork training. The disciples were legally blind spiritually; they did not know about spiritual things well. They were not yet interested in proclaiming the kingdom of God or having compassion on the needy. Regardless of their spiritual condition, Jesus gave them fieldwork training in the hope that they would be leaders for God's world salvation work. Today's passage also tells us about Jesus' hometown people and King Herod.

I. Jesus was rejected by his hometown people (1-6a)

After healing Jairus' daughter, Jesus went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples (1). When the Sabbath came, Jesus began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed (2). Jesus gave them the good news of the kingdom of God, and his word had authority and power. The hometown people were distressed living under Roman rule. They were even more distressed by the torment of Satan. They were greatly comforted by Jesus' words. When the hometown people heard Jesus' words, their hearts were touched by the lifegiving word of God spoken by Jesus. After listening to Jesus' words, they acknowledged that Jesus was not an ordinary man but the Son of God. But the devil came quickly and snatched away the words of life from them. As a result, they lost spiritual sense, and began to judge Jesus with a human standard (Jn 8:15). They began to ask derogatory questions: "Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't he just a man on the bottom of society? Isn't he the son of Mary?" They meant, "He is an illegitimate child" (3). "Is he preaching to us? He looks handsome but he is too presumptuous." When they saw Jesus with human eyes, they were agitated by emotional feelings and began to take offense at him instead of recognizing him as the Son of God.

All the Jews had expected to see the anointed Messiah who was promised to come--even in their dreams. In Mark chapter 10 we see that

even a blind beggar had a dream of the Messiah. When he heard that Jesus healed the sick and cast out demons and proclaimed the kingdom of God to the poor he acknowledged Jesus is the Son of God. The long-awaited Messiah came and visited his hometown and spoke to them the good news of the kingdom of God. But they despised and rejected him. The best gift was placed in the palms of their hands, but they could not take it. Man's tragedy is not his human condition; it is his spiritual blindness. God blesses each person abundantly--sometimes through many blessings, and sometimes through many hardships. But there are many people who do not see God's countless blessings because they are blind spiritually. One day a young man came to me and complained about many things for fifty minutes. He had received so many blessings from God and love from many people, but he could not see this at all. His tragedy was that he was a blind man spiritually. Ephesians 1:17,18 says, "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...."

Mark, the author of the gospel, comments that Jesus was misunderstood by his hometown people because they were blind spiritually (6a). In this case, "faith" is to see Jesus, not with emotional feelings, but with the eyes of faith. In the previous chapter, Jesus was amazed by Jairus' "just believing" faith. This time, Jesus was amazed by his hometown people's lack of faith. Jesus wanted to share the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus wanted to invite all of his hometown people to the pearly gates of the kingdom of God. Jesus wanted to heal the sick and drive out demons from demon-possessed people of his hometown. But because of their spiritual blindness, Jesus could not do much for them except for a few healings. Jesus was very sorry. But Jesus comforted himself with the words of prophecy: "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor" (4).

II. Fieldwork training (6b-13)

First, Jesus sent them two by two (6b-7). Why did Jesus send them out two by two for fieldwork training? Jesus knew that in a battle, cooperation

is most important. While one dashes toward the enemy foxhole, the other must cover him. This truth also applies to spiritual warfare. We know many stories of how two people who united into one made great successes. The Protestant Reformation was possible for Martin Luther because Melancthon was there behind him. Calvin's reformation was possible because Zwingli was always there behind him. Ecclesiastes 4:10,12a says, "If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves." One who has no one to support him can make no great success in the world. Fruitful ministry comes when two are united into one spiritual vessel. This is the reason Jesus sent them two by two.

Second, Jesus gave them authority over evil spirits (7). Look at verse 7b. "...he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits." Why did Jesus give them authority over evil spirits instead of giving them a certain amount of travelers' checks? For Jesus knew that demon possession is the most serious problem to all mankind. So Jesus gave them authority to cast out evil spirits. Here we learn that we should cast out demons from our sheep instead of giving them many Big Macs. We cannot cast out demons. But when we depend on Jesus, we can cast out demons from our sheep. We must ask Jesus to give us authority to cast out evil spirits from our sheep.

Third, Jesus taught them to depend on God only (8-9). Look at verses 8,9. "These were his instructions: 'Take nothing for the journey except a staff--no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic.'" Did Jesus mean that they should become like Buddhist monks, whose mission is to beg wherever they go, and suffer from hunger and poverty? No! His instructions were given as "principles." These principles demanded of them rigorous commitment and total dependence on God for material necessities as well as for methods in proclaiming the gospel. Simply speaking, in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus we should not depend on money, but on God only. This is the only principle that we have in evangelizing the world. In history, the principle has proved to be the most effective element in doing something. Usually principles are based on universal truth. France was one of the world power nations after World War II. France tried to colonize Vietnam again. One old Vietnamese, the leader of the country, called Ho Chi Minh, rejected the colonization by France: He believed that truth wins victory over evil in the long run. This idea became his principle in leading and encouraging his people to fight to the end--even until no one was left. He and his people defeated the army of glorious France and next, the other world power nation. His principle defeated modern technology. His victory is comparable to one ant's victory over two elephants in a wrestling match. When we have to live a life of faith, we should not live according to situation ethics, but according to the Biblical principles. A person or a nation that ignores "principles," but is only

pragmatic, is doomed to be ruined.

Fourth, Jesus taught them the superiority of the gospel (10-13). Look at verses 10 and 11. "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them." The disciples were told to accept the hospitality offered to them. But because of the hospitality they should not compromise with the people's sins. If people will not accept the gospel message, they should shake the dust off their feet. It does not mean to be rude to them. But we must show ungodly people the superiority of the gospel, for the gospel of Jesus gives life to all men. Some gospel workers are too shy. God's workers must study the Bible deeply until they realize that the gospel of Jesus is superior to everything and only the gospel gives eternal life to all humankind.

What did the disciples do in their fieldwork training? Look at verse 12. "They went out and preached that people should repent." The disciples were not yet trained enough to be able to say, "repent." But they obeyed the commander's order exactly as it was. Thus their fieldwork training was successful.

Look at verse 13. "They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them." When they obeyed their commander, the disciples could experience power and authority to heal the sick and drive out demons.

Whenever we see demon-possessed people, we become helpless. But from now on, we must remember that Jesus gave his disciples power and authority to drive out demons. We should not be helpless when we see demon-possessed people. Rather, we must ask God to give us authority to drive out demons in them. When we don't drive out demons from his people, we are doing nothing. Therefore, we must know that Jesus wants us to have authority and power to drive out demons from his people.

III. Burdensome King Herod (14-29)

First, King Herod was a demon-possessed man (14-16). King Herod had already heard about Jesus. When the news of Jesus' disciples' fieldwork training was reported, he was disturbed like the Gerasene demoniac and extremely distressed. He spread his intelligence agents all over the place. They reported to him, saying, "Some said that John the Baptist has been raised from the dead; others said that Jesus is Elijah; and still others, that he is a prophet." When King Herod heard all these things, he was haunted by the demons in him. King Herod was again in the severe torment of the

devil. King Herod could not erase from his mind the picture of the righteous man that he had beheaded. In verse 16 he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!" Herod was overwhelmed by his own guilty conscience. He was a victim of the devil's torment. Herod was a king, but he was nothing but a demon-possessed man. He was nothing but a descendant of Cain.

Second, King Herod was an adulterous king (17-20). Mark tells us in verses 17-29 the story of how King Herod beheaded the righteous man, John the Baptist, and how he became a slave of Satan. God had given him power so that he might serve his people. But Herod abused his power over his people. He distressed his younger brother Philip by taking away his wife, Herodias. Later, he beheaded the righteous man, John the Baptist. He never intended to kill John the Baptist, because he respected him as a righteous and holy man (20). In this part, we learn that immorality is the hotbed of violence. When King Herod wanted to gratify his immoral desire, he made his brother Philip's wife his wife. Another example is Philip's wife Herodias. Because John the Baptist said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife" (18), Herodias, a palace prostitute, was so upset that she tempered with King Herod to behead the righteous man John the Baptist.

Third, King Herod was a drunkard (21-29). Look at verse 21a. "Finally the opportune time came." This refers to Herodias, who had nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him (19). "On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests" (21b,22a). In his drunken state, Herod watched her dance. While he was watching her, he was overcome by his lecherous feelings. He began to talk in a delirium: "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom" (23). His words were a nebulous exaggeration. But the devil never missed a chance. At his words, this young girl asked him for the head of John the Baptist, according to her mother's instructions (24,25).

The king was greatly distressed by this, but he did not want to reveal himself to be a weak man, so he ordered his executioners to bring the head of John the Baptist. At the time, he appeared to be exercising his power and authority. But in reality, he was surrendering himself to the power of sin and death. Then the devil completely overtook him. Herod was a king, but he was a demon-possessed man; he was a drunkard. His drinking habit ruined his life. His life was the continuation of Satan's torment.

In this passage we learn that Jesus gave his disciples fieldwork training. It was merely fieldwork training, but the kingdom of Satan shook. When Jesus sent them out, he gave them some instructions as principles. The children of God or the servants of God should be men and women of principle. They can never be victims of situation ethics. When Jesus sent them out, he told them to preach to people to repent. When he sent them

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out, he gave them authority and power to drive out demons and heal the sick. May God give us the clear message of repentance, and power and authority to drive out demons.