

Mark 6:7-13:30 Jesus Sends the 12 Apostles to Preach and Heal

Having been rebuffed at Nazareth (also Luke 4:29), Jesus begins his third preaching mission in Galilee. When Jesus called fishermen as his first disciples (1:16–20), he promised them that they would soon be fishing for people. When he selected the Twelve, it was in order that **‘they might be with him and that he might send them out ...’** as we read in Mark 3:14–15. But all this time they have been companions and spectators, and sometimes a privileged private audience, rather than active partners in his mission.

7 And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits;--Jesus summoned the twelve chief disciples and began to send them out in pairs. Mark mentions them being given authority over unclean spirits, as if their only mission was exorcism, and release of spiritual oppression, but Matthew clarifies in 10:1 that they were **to heal every disease and every sickness** as well, and then summarizes their mission in Matt 10:7-8 saying **7 And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’ 8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those with leprosy, cast out demons.** The authority of the Twelve is to act. Mark tells us basically nothing about the content of what they are supposed to teach. Matthew lets us know in 10:5-6 **5 These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, saying, “Do not go on a road to Gentiles, and do not enter a city of Samaritans; 6 but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.** So, their mission was to be focused on the Jewish communities in the area, and not the Samaritans or Gentiles at this time. Jesus and His disciples went to the Jewish population first, because the Jews had received so many promises of the Messiah and His mission to them in the Old Testament, and these needed to be fulfilled. Matthew 4:15–16, Jesus quotes Isaiah 9:1–2 to say: **“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people walking in darkness have seen a great light...”** This prophecy points to a specific geographic and spiritual fulfillment. Zebulun and Naphtali were the northernmost tribes of Israel.

Jesus spends a surprising amount of time instructing them on the preparation for their mission, as recorded in all three gospels, compared to the conduct of the mission itself. Jesus seems very concerned that they represent His ministry properly as His representatives. Sending the disciples in pairs conformed to Jewish custom (e.g., Eccl 4:9–10) It was, and is a sensible policy, providing mutual support and companionship, which was followed in the apostolic church. Traveling in pairs was advantageous in several respects: it provided company and common counsel, and it augmented each partner with complementary gifts. The consistency throughout the Bible of God sending at least two witnesses to establish legal testimony (Dt. 17:6, Rev 11, etc.) suggests that God is giving witness through these men of the need to Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand. It also benefited their hearers, for in the Jewish world “a matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses” (Deut 19:15).

8 and He instructed them that they were to take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belt—9 but to wear sandals; and He added, “Do not wear two tunics.”-- The travelling provisions which are forbidden, bread and bag for carrying food, and no money to buy necessities was to teach them to rely on God. After all, Jesus had taught them to pray **give us this day, our daily bread**, and so now He was going to teach them that they could have faith in God to do just that! Jesus had taught them in the Sermon on the Mount, that God would provide, and now He is going to prove it to them. Compare His instructions to Matthew 6:25-33 **25 “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing?** So, Jesus was using this mission to prove to the disciples that His words were not an exaggeration. If we allow Him to God will provide all we need. If we choose to do it ourselves, then He will allow that too! So, the disciples were to take nothing with

them except a staff, they were travelling light, just like the Israelites leaving for the Exodus. They were allowed to wear sandals, but not to buy them. This makes sense, since they were going to be doing a lot of walking, but they had to rely on God that their sandals didn't break, because they were not allowed to bring an extra pair. They also couldn't bring along an extra tunic, or outer garment to use as a blanket. The travelling religious teacher with staff, sandals, and a single tunic or garment, but with no travelling pack or provision for the journey fits into a recognizable strand which extends from Elijah and John the Baptist through to the friars and some monks of the Middle Ages and several religious orders today. Jesus authorized the disciples to be his delegates with respect to both word and power. Their message and deeds were to be an extension of his own. Jewish law acknowledged that **"the sent one is as the man who commissioned him."** This formulation lies behind the mission of the Twelve, who are sent forth as **"appointed representatives"** of Jesus in the legal sense of the term. The mission of the Twelve is not carefree nonattachment but fraught with danger, and complete dependance on God for their personal safety, having faith in the new authority conferred by Jesus. They were to put their faith in the One who had sent them. And, it required a lot of faith.

10 And He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. 11 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 as a testimony against them."--Remember, this is the Middle East, a desert climate, and walking out without provisions, especially a large supply of water is a very dangerous thing to do. That is why in Middle Eastern society the expectation of hospitality for any visiting stranger was not only established as a good thing to do, it was required by custom going back to Abraham, and even before then. Even more-so, receiving a visiting Rabbi, or his disciples, who were representing God, and His Word. Jesus told them (Matt 10:10b-13a **for the worker is deserving of his support. 11 And whatever city or village you enter, inquire who is worthy in it, and stay at his house until you leave that city. 12 As you enter the house, give it your greeting. 13 If the house is worthy, see that your blessing of peace comes upon it.** The disciples were instructed to accept the hospitality which was offered. Whenever a home was opened to them they were to stay there until they departed from the village. The Twelve are to be grateful guests by staying put where they are received. They were not to dishonor the home by accepting more comfortable provisions offered by another host. As Jesus tells them later in Matthew 10:40-42 **40 "The one who receives you receives Me, and the one who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. 41 The one who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and the one who receives a righteous person in the name of a righteous person shall receive a righteous person's reward. 42 And whoever gives one of these little ones just a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, truly I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."**But Jesus also makes it clear that there will be some households (and not just single households but whole communities?) where they and their message are not welcome. There would be villages where no hospitality would be offered and where their word would not be tolerated. In this situation they were to shake the dust from their feet, as a testimony and warning to the villagers, and go elsewhere. Matt 10:13b-15 **But if it is not worthy, take back your blessing of peace. 14 And whoever does not receive you nor listen to your words, as you leave that house or city, shake the dust off your feet. 15 Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment, than for that city.** It was the custom of pious Jews who had travelled outside of Israel to remove carefully from their feet and clothing all dust of the alien lands in which they had travelled. By this action they dissociated themselves from the pollution of those lands and their ultimate judgment. There was no salvation on the basis of ethnicity, nation, or race. Even in the Promised Land there will be those who reject the Promised

One. **“Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel”** (Rom 9:6). Nevertheless, as v. 12 indicates, the purpose of the warning is not to damn but to induce repentance.

12 And they went out and preached that people are to repent. --Their message was simple, echoing Jesus’ message to Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at Hand. They preached what they heard from Jesus.

13 And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them.--As in 1:32–34 etc. exorcism and healing are carefully distinguished. It was the former only which was specifically mentioned in the commission in v. 7, but the threefold ministry of preaching, exorcism, and healing which Jesus has already been conducting is now appropriately extended to the disciples. Anointing with (olive) oil is mentioned in association with healing only here in the gospels (and elsewhere in the NT only at Jas. 5:14 **14 Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;** Oil was being used symbolically here to represent the Spirit or blessings of God, as when a healed leper was restored to society (Lv. 14:15–18); It was also a physical act that would help the disciples focus their faith on the healing in the name of Jesus.

Luke 9:6 tells us, **6 And as they were leaving, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.**

In obedience to their commission the Twelve proclaimed the gospel through their word and deed. Their message and the exercise of power confirm the representative character of their mission. They preach the message of repentance which Jesus had proclaimed; they cast out demons and heal the sick because these activities had characterized his ministry. Their coming to a village brought healing and salvation in the most comprehensive terms because they were his representatives. Jesus had commissioned them and they came in his name. What Jesus did in his own power as commissioned by God, the disciples did in his power.

30 The apostles gathered together with Jesus; and they reported to Him all that they had done and taught. 31 And He said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a little while.” Later, we read in Luke 10:17 **“The seventy-two returned with joy and said, ‘Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.’”** And I’m sure that their report was similar.

Apparently, Jesus was pleased with their work, because He offered them rest. If you’re wondering about how their experience in depending totally on God went, we get a recap at the Last Supper.

Jesus asks them in Luke 22:35 **35 And He said to them, “When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?” They said, “No, nothing.”** They lacked nothing, even though they had nothing, because they were dependent on God to provide. Jesus points back to this mission of theirs as an example of when God came through for them, to build their faith before the trial that would occur in the Garden of Gethsemane, and throughout His trials, and crucifixion. This was an example of when the apostles had done it right, and Jesus used it to strengthen their faith. What lessons has God brought you through that He now uses from time to time to strengthen your faith?