

Sent to Heal

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Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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We just sang *Lift High the Cross*. Usually that song is the first hymn with the cross coming in. But now you had a chance to sit and listen to it. Think about those words, “*Lift high the cross, the cross of Christ proclaim till all the world proclaims His name.*” It’s a strange thing today that in our texts, we are going to see that not all the world proclaims Jesus’ name, even those in His hometown. Today in our *Journey with Jesus* series, we are talking about being *Sent to Heal*.

The Disciples are being Sent to Heal. But why? Let’s open your Bibles. Open your Bible to Mark 6. We have two sections today, verses one through six titled *Jesus rejected at Nazareth*, and the next part *Jesus sends out the Twelve Apostles*, and our forefathers in the faith have put these two readings together to focus on today because they go together. There is a consistent theme. There is something happening that matters because both of these things happen.

Mark chapter 6, starting in verse 1. Jesus goes away from the place where He was, where we just ended, from Jairus house, where He had just helped this daughter be raised from the dead. So, He goes away from that town because I am sure word started to get around. There was going to be no way He would be able to leave there. A crowd would come around Him. He kept moving. He goes away. He goes to His hometown. He has not been up to Nazareth for quite some time. His disciples get to go with Him this time. And on the Sabbath, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard Him were astonished. This was a gift, to be invited to speak at the synagogue, to teach at the synagogue as a visiting rabbi. He was invited to do this. The people wanted to hear what He had to say because these were people in His hometown. They knew Him growing up.

We do not hear a lot in scripture about what Jesus was like as a child. There are just a couple of vignettes, a couple of episodes of His life. But

these people saw it. They knew what He was like. They knew what He did day to day. Because in a small town, they know everybody else's business. They know; they understand. They know Him, and they have heard the stories. They have not heard *all* of them, but they have heard *some* of them, that He has healed people, that He has helped people that nobody else would help. They are interested. They want to know what He has to say or with what authority He speaks. In verse two, they heard Him, and they were amazed and astonished.

And what did they say? Where did this man get these things? What is this wisdom given to him? How are such mighty works done by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters with us?

Did you know Jesus had a family and brothers and sisters? That comes to a surprise to many people. You do not often think about that, but He did. And why is not His father Joseph mentioned here? Did you notice that too? Most scholars think it was because Joseph had already passed away. There is not something interesting. Too much going on here, but that's probably what happened, that this is who they knew still. This is who was there. Where did this man get these things? What is this wisdom? How could He do such mighty works now?

Let's do what Martin Luther says and put the best construction on this. Let's think about this in the best way when you think about it with this. You think they are amazed, right? That's what it says. They were astonished. Where did he get these things? We are excited about them. Where, what is this wisdom given to him? I am interested to see what God is doing through this man. How are such mighty works done by his hands? We have seen his hands create things in our town. How can God do such great things through his hands? May God, the Father Almighty be praised for this.

If we put the best construction on it, they might be excited about it. Because they are familiar with Him. It's hard to see people the way other people see them. It's like how I have been seeing things on social media go around about how there are some Olympians who are going to France,

the Olympics that are going on right now, who have come from Loudoun County. Have you seen some of these things? It's proud. It's exciting. I am proud. I have lived in Loudoun County for a year. And I am proud of them. But if you grew up with them, like if you went to school with them, if you knew them a little bit more, maybe you would not be so amazed and astonished. Maybe you might be thinking, how could they do these great things? Same thing here.

It might be that they just want to know what God is doing through Jesus. You see, that's the path of faith. You can have faith and ask questions. You can have faith and even have doubts. But what happens next shows us that many of the people at least went to different way. At the end of verse three, *Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph and Judas and Simon are not as sisters here with us, and they were offended.* They took offense at Him. They thought there is no way a regular guy like us could do these things. There is no way God could bless him with these things. There is no way that he could be who people are saying that he could be because we know him. We know him. He is too familiar to us.

The path of faith looks to what God is doing and asks questions with wonder. The path of unbelief looks at this and ask questions with jealousy. *Why not me, Lord? What about me?* You see the difference here? Once they are offended, Jesus says in verse 4, "A prophet is not without honor except in His hometown and among His relatives, and in His own household," and He could do no mighty works there except He did lay His hands on a few sick people and healed them, and He marveled. He marveled. They were astonished at what He taught, and He was astonished at their unbelief.

Notice this, even in their unbelief He stayed and healed the few people that He could. He stayed in Ezekiel 2. We heard a little bit ago, the Lord talking to the prophet who will go to the people who have completely abandoned Him. He is going to send a prophet and in doing so, this is what the Lord says. *I am sending you to tell them what I am saying and whether they listen or they refuse. For remember at heart, they are rebels—*This is

our rebellious nature. This is our sinful nature—*At least they will know that they had a prophet among them.* What is God saying? He is saying, “Whether they listen or not, I have sent you Ezekiel. I have sent you as a prophet to be the one who speaks my word, to be my presence with them so that they would know even in their unbelief that I love them, that I am with them. That I care for them, that I want them to be part of my kingdom. And even in their rebellion, I will speak words of truth and grace and promise and love to them.” What is the point of that? What are prophets called to do? Prophets are called to speak hard words of God to people who turned the wrong way. And what is the hope? What is the effect of those words? What God hopes to happen is for them to turn around. The word for turning around in Hebrew is *repent*. To repent, to turn around and see that God is good, that He loves you, that He has a plan for you, that He is with you. And Jesus marvels because of their unbelief, but He does not abandon them. Those who believed, He laid His hands on. He then goes to the other small villages around Nazareth and starts to teach.

This is a hard thing to think that the people who know you the most would not trust what you are saying. You would think your reputation would precede you. Jesus was the Son of God. He was perfect in every way. My guess is that He did not sin against the people in that town when He was growing up. That’s what we believe. That’s what we say. That’s what scripture tells us. There was nothing resentful about His presence. There was nothing that would have caused other people to be harmed by it or to think less of God. This offense comes from jealousy, from self centeredness, from these things that we tend to, without even thinking about, let ourselves really dig into in our lives.

So, what does Jesus do in response? He does not give up. He does not give up on them. He does what He can, and He keeps moving because the kingdom of God is near. The kingdom of God is at hand. He is the kingdom of God, and His presence is helping other people see what God is all about. So, how does the second story work with this?

Let’s look at verse 7, *And Jesus called the Twelve and began to send them out two by two.* I love that phrase, *and began to send them out.* It was not

like He called a meeting and they all went out at once. This was not like a Lord of the Rings gathering and we are going to go out and do this. It was like He began as they came to Him, as they were there. He began sending. When does He stop sending them out two by two? It almost seems like this is saying He has not stopped. He began to. He keeps sending out them two by two. Why? He gave them authority over all of the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff. No bread, no bag, no money in their belts. I would bet that many of you did not even come to church with that few of things. I am not going to ask you to tell me what's in your purses or your bags, but I would bet you have plenty of stuff to make sure that you are okay. Jesus sends them into towns that they have not been to before with much, much less.

Verse 10, He says to them, *Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there, and if any place will not receive you, will not listen to you. When you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.* He is asking them to trust Him on their journey. He is asking them to focus on His journey. What might people assume if these new two by two groups come into their town with all kinds of stuff with them? They might assume that they are traveling salesmen. They are here to do something else. No. Jesus wants them to focus on bringing the kingdom of God to His people. In fact, He had already set them up for this. This in Mark 3 is the way that He called them to be the twelve in the first place. Jesus appointed twelve of them. They were to accompany Him, to go along with Him, to follow Him, to watch Him, to see what He does, to learn what He does, and then to send them out to preach and give them the authority over all unclean spirits from the beginning of their relationship with Jesus. This is what they were always going to do. This is not an extra thing. This is not something that only the Twelve get to do. It is what they were called to be and to do. And this is not just for the Twelve. In other two gospels, Matthew and Luke, they talk about *the Sending of the Seventy-Two*. This is for all followers of Jesus. We are called to accompany Him, to learn, to be close to Him, to understand, to have this relationship with Him so that He would send us out into the world with His authority, to help others see that no matter what their suffering that

they are in, no matter what is happening in their worlds, that God is with them, that He loves them, that He wants a relationship with them, that He calls them back to Himself. This sounds similar to something we have talked about for quite a while, that we are *Loved*, and that we are *Sent*. This is what the Disciples are. We are loved by Jesus. We are kept close, and we are sent into the world to help others experience this and see this too. This is what we do, and He gives us a great way to focus on this. Focus when you are on your journey only on the kingdom of God. Focus on helping others see Him more clearly. And if a place does not receive you and does not listen to you as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.

Does this feel good when people do not listen to you, and they get what they deserve? Do you like that? There is something within us that just feels like this ultimate fairness, if somebody does something bad, then they need to get what they deserve. We do not like it when something good happens to them. People need to get what they deserve. This is not the sense of this text. The shaking off of the feet is to let lie what is there, to leave the dust of your failures, to leave the dust of your brokenness, to leave the dust of a word of God that you cannot see how it is going to make a breakthrough, to leave it there and to let God take care of it. The dust is still there. The people are still there. Can God do something with them and through them? Yes, but maybe not through you. Maybe not through you. Maybe it is for another time, for another place, for another person. And that is okay. Because God has got this.

Verse 12, *So they went out, and they proclaimed that people should repent.* That sounds rough. It sounds rough until you remember that in Mark 1, Jesus' entire message is "*Repent; believe the good news; see that the kingdom of God is at hand.*" All the disciples are doing are asking people to see what Jesus is all about, to turn from wherever they are looking, wherever they are focusing, whatever they are focused on, to Jesus to see that what He brings is true healing. And as they focus on Jesus, they are going to watch what He does over the next couple of years. And as He goes to Jerusalem for the last time, as they see Him up on the cross, as they see Him pray for each person that has put Him there, as they see Him

take all of what we deserved and pay for it, the disciples and Jesus are asking us to see this is for us. This is a gift. This is the payment that we deserve that Jesus has taken on. And on Easter morning, the disciples come and see that the tomb is empty. And Jesus reappears. Easter has happened. He says, “Look, all of it has been paid. Everything has been paid for. I am victorious.”

We look to Him with trust, faith, and hope. And we know that He has done all of this for us. This is the good news: Jesus has been raised from the dead for you and gives you the gift of new life, not just in eternity, but today, today to be lived right here, right now. So as we follow him, we go out with His authority and His power and His hope. And that is what changes the world. As I was reading about this today, this scripture, all this week, there was one theme that really set out in it. It was the theme of the church over the last millennia to look at this and say, that was for some other people in some other time. That was for the Twelve, only the Twelve. That is not me. I do not think that is true. I do not think that is what we take from this. I think what we take from this is that the kingdom of God is at hand, and the life Jesus has given to us is to be lived now and so we are sent. We are *sent* as people to focus on God’s word and His kingdom to help those around us *heal*. You may not be able to heal all of the aches and pains in people’s bodies and minds and spirits, but you may be able to help them heal in one way or another. Your time that you spend with them, simply listening might help them heal. Your time serving others might help them heal. Your time spent focused on others instead of ourselves will help others heal. All of this is to bring the kingdom of God to those who are not sure about it, who it might be too familiar to, who have never heard it before so that they would see that the promises of God have come true in Jesus. We are loved. and we are sent. We are sent to bring the healing of God into this world.

Now, I want to tell you what I was going to make you do, but I am not going to make you do it. There is a bit of discomfort when it comes to going out into the world. And what I was going to do, think about this. I was going to have you all stand up and take 30 seconds and switch seats, move to a completely different location, and sit there for the whole rest of

the service. Many of your blood pressures just rose about 20 points. Because I, you all sit in the same spot, right? I get it. There is a bit of comfort there. And I know. I was going to have you do this. And I thought, by doing that, there might be something there that you all come here to heal. Your week has been rough. The things you are dealing with are difficult and sitting in this spot where you know, where you can see everything, where whatever it is, who you are sitting, but there is comfort in that. I get that. So I want you just to think about this. What would it be like to get a little bit uncomfortable, so that you meet new people, so that there are people around you who you do not know all their names, so that you might discover somebody's story and hear their story of suffering, of pain, of unbelief at some point? Maybe God has put you in that uncomfortable situation so that you might speak Jesus' words of healing to them. Think about it this week. I am not going to ask you to do it right now. It's good to heal and be comfortable. But think about how God might be calling you to get a little uncomfortable so that the Word of God. God can be made real in someone's life.

Let's close with a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your word today, that as we read it, as we study it, as we get comfortable opening up our Bibles and reading through it, Lord, that You bless us. We pray, Lord, that You would allow us to stay close to Your kingdom, which means just close to Jesus. Remind us of Your presence every single day and all the things that we go through. Remind us that You are with us, whether we are rebellious or not, that You are there. Allow us to hear Your words that we might come near to You. All of this, Lord, not for ourselves, but so that we might be able to speak Your goodness to those around us.

Lord, we ask that you put people around us who doubt, who do not have faith in You, that we might be able, through our actions, through our kindness, through our words, to share Jesus with them. And by this, Lord, that Your kingdom will come right here on earth as it is in heaven.

We pray all of this in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.