

HE BEGAN TO SEND THE TWELVE OUT

Mark 6:1-13 (Key Verse 6:7)

“Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits”

Jesus disciples had been following Jesus very well, just last week they experienced the power of Jesus to raise the dead to live through faith. Indeed Jesus had come to reveal the kingdom of God. However, no one can enter God's kingdom unless they are born again. And so Jesus carried our sin and died on cross so that by faith in Him and His finished work, for our salvation we may be saved. However, if Jesus work ended there, then he would have just been regarded as merely as a righteous man who died on the cross for many. The meaning of his death would have been lost over the years. Jesus work also entailed raising the disciples into apostles, who would preach the gospel of salvation with Jesus authority. However, raising disciples is not easy. It requires a lot of training as a spiritual leader. May we learn through this passage, how Jesus trained his disciples. Amen!

In verse 1, we read that Jesus went to His hometown, accompanied by His disciples. Look at verse 2, *“2When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?”* First, Jesus teaching amazed the people, they were surprised at the way he taught. Secondly, they were also surprised at the wisdom he had, the knowledge he had and how simple he made it look. And thirdly, Jesus teaching came with remarkable miracles. Jesus had not gone to any theological school like the teachers of the law and religious leaders of the day. He was not taught under one of the prominent religious leaders of the day in order to gain reputation among the religious leaders. However, both the way and what he taught was remarkable. We know from other books, Jesus was regarded to have taught with authority. Not because he was loud, demanding or lording it over the people. But because those who heard could begin to clearly understand the meaning of God's words that had seemed hidden. They could feel a refreshment in their souls which they never felt before. How could this be? This was possible because Jesus is and was the very living word of God. He is the word of God incarnate. He did not need theological certificates to qualify or validate him to teach and demonstrate the word of God.

The remarkable miracles were performed in order to verify or validate His teaching. They were simply a sign that pointed to the true Messiah, the savior of our souls. The miracles also demonstrated the power of the word of God. Unlike what so called miraculous powers are used for in our time. However, the people began to question other things about Jesus. Look at verse 3, *“Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, a Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?”* And they took offense at him.” All of a sudden they began to question who Jesus actually was. Since this was Jesus hometown, they began to remember Jesus the young man, who grew up in their hometown. They began to remember him as a young boy who used to fix their doors and make their wooden tables. More than that, they even ridiculed Jesus, saying, “Is not this Mary’s son” rather than saying Joseph’s son, as though he was an illegitimate son. This shows that there might have been rumors around the marriage between Joseph and Mary, regarding Mary’s pregnancy with Jesus before she was married to Joseph. And so in this way they looked down on Jesus as though he was even an illegitimate son. Jesus had brothers and sisters, which shows that Mary went on to have more children after giving birth to Jesus.

Though they saw Jesus power and wisdom, they refused to learn from him so they might be saved. Rather they decided to take offence at him. In other words they became very upset over Jesus. As if to say, how dare you lecture us about the things of God, who do you think you are. We know who you are, you are a carpenter, son of Mary with brothers and sisters in our hometown. Out of jealousy they only saw Jesus humanly and then rejected him. It was a clear prejudice against Jesus by his towns people. They used Jesus background in order to justify their refusal to accept his words. And this is how people sometimes reject the truth in order to suit what they want and believe. While you are talking to them, they would be thinking in their hearts, who does this person think they are telling me about repentance. The result however was that, they were the once who lost a great opportunity to experience God's grace and kingdom. Look at verse 5, *“5He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.”* They could not receive much healing in the town because they lacked faith. This lack of faith means that they intentionally rejected Jesus. Jesus was even amazed at their lack of faith in verse 6.

The religious leaders rejected Jesus because of greed to power whereas his home town people reject Jesus because of the human affiliation with Jesus. They fail to see Jesus as the son of God, a gospel worker who had come to teach about the kingdom of God. All along in other towns, Jesus disciples experienced amazing things while with Jesus. Many people were moved by Jesus words, Demons were driven out before his words. Many sick people were healed. Jesus disciples even saw Jesus bring a dead girl to life. But when Jesus visited his hometown, the townspeople rejected him and Jesus could not do much. His disciples must have been disappointed. They could have become doubtful of Jesus. Thinking, why do the people who know Jesus well not accept him at all? Could it be that Jesus has some problems? Or hidden things he secretly hid from us.

Jesus did not hide being rejected even though he had a plan to send them of a field training work soon. Actually, it seems Jesus intentionally showed them, him being rejected, because they would also be rejected when they go to preach the gospel. Being rejected is one of the important training courses to grow as Jesus disciple. By doing so we can know how much people are seized by their prejudices and biases. We can better understand people's sinful nature and the foolishness of this world. Rejection is not nice at all, I don't think there is anyone who likes rejection. We can experience rejection in many places, when we apply for bursary or NASFAS grant we can get the painful rejection letter. I remember back in the days, whenever I received a feedback letter from a bursary application and it started by saying, "We regret to inform you..." I always said. They do not need to regret, rather give me the bursary and you will not regret. Other places is when we apply for a job, we go for interview and think we nailed it only to receive a letter that say, we regret to inform you.... Other painful ones is when a man is rejected by a woman he loves whom he wanted to marry, a marriage proposal rejection of some sort. So if you have faced many rejections in your life, you are a good candidate to be Jesus disciple and be used greatly by God. Jesus provided a training ground for His disciples to learn and see that even Jesus Christ is not immune from being rejected. If Jesus our master can be rejected so badly, we can take courage in serving God fully with our lives. Luke 6:22 says, "*Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.*" I pray that we may not shy away from sharing the gospel with others because our fear of rejection. If we are rejected because of Jesus name, the bible says we are indeed blessed. It is a training ground to develop our understanding of people and the world, so we may grow to be good disciples of Jesus who can embrace everyone and anyone.

Look at verse 4, "*Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home."* Jesus did explain the reason why in His home town he was rejected. I think many of you can relate with this. When I was still a student I would take what I learned from my bible studies and testimony writing and try share in my home town during the University breaks. However, somehow I would not have the same zeal as I had in JHB. People knew me well in Kuruman, they did not know me as one who preaches the word of God. I just felt my spirit suppressed to share the gospel with others. I realized that I really needed much prayer before I could think of any evangelistic work in my home town. Through the Lord's mercy I received an idea to at least prepare a small message for Christmas, that I would share with my family back home.

Though Jesus was rejected, he was not discouraged at all. We read in the last part of verse 6 that, Jesus went around from village to village teaching and even went further to send out the twelve. Let us all read verse 7, "Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits." Jesus also called his twelve disciples and sent them out for field training. Let us see how Jesus trained them.

First, Jesus trained his disciples not to depend on material things but only on God. Look at verse 8-9, "*8These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9Wear sandals but not an extra shirt."* There was no mention about taking some, food, money or at least extra clothes. Jesus wanted them to travel, believing that God will provide them everything they need. Preaching is God's work, and sure the lord provides for those who do God's work. Anyone who wants to preach the gospel and do God's work should first have this faith. No matter how much money and food we may have, without faith we can never do God's work. Strictly speaking, if we have money, food and clothes, we should throw them away and go forward believing in God. Our faith in doing God's work should only depend on God and not what we have or our skills. It is not a matter of how much free time we have to do bible study, or to write testimony. It does not depend on our work schedule. It depends on our faith in God's provision, because teaching the bible or preaching God's word is the work of God. One of the missionaries to China by the name of Hadson Tylor once said, "Depend on it. God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply. He is too wise a God to frustrate His purposes for lack of funds, and He can just as easily supply them ahead of time as afterwards, and He much prefers doing so."

Second, Jesus trained his disciples not to depend on men but only on God. Look at verse 10, "*10Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town."* There was a common practice in those days, whereby prophets and the Jewish teachers would stay in a house where they were accepted. They would stay few days while preaching in the area. However, Jesus meant that they should not move from house to house for better food or better comforts. If preachers begin to be interested in being served here and there, they cannot be good servants of God. Jesus said, "stay there until you leave that town." They were to accept how the lord was providing for them and mainly focus on doing the work of God.

What happens when they arrive at a place they are not welcomed? Look at verse 11, "*11And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them."* Those who do not welcome the disciples of Jesus are those who do not listen to their message. They do not even want to listen to the message. To not welcome

the messenger is to also not welcome the sender, our Lord Jesus Christ. Luke 10:16 says, “*Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.*” If they are not welcomed, they are to shake the dust off their feet as a testimony against them. In those days, if Jewish people had to go in or through a Gentile city, as they left they would shake the dust off their feet. It was a gesture that said, “We don’t want to take anything from this Gentile city with us.” The disciples were also sending this clear message to those who reject them. It was a clear message that, I have told you God’s word clearly. Now if you are judged by God because you do not accept it, it is now on you and your responsibility.

Let ponder a bit on what was the message they came to deliver. Look at verse 12, “*12They went out and preached that people should repent.*” It was the message of repentance. It is usually not an easy message to receive, because it is the message that directly deals with our sinful hearts head on. And no body wants to be told they are sinners. Everyone wants to hear that I am a good person, I do this and I do that. That is why even in our times the message of repentance is not so popular. As Christians we compare each other to one another and if we are all doing a common sin, we never realize it. All because we are not comparing ourselves to what the Bible teaches. And so we can never think we are in sin. However, the message of repentance is so important because firstly, Jesus on his first training of the disciples to go preach to others, gives them the message of repentance. Secondly, to prepare the way for Jesus coming, John preached the message of repentance. Thirdly, to be truly born again, can never happen unless there is repentance within our hearts. I am no longer living for self or this or that, I am now living for God. I am no longer lord of my life, Jesus is Lord of my life. It is a change of allegiance, from living for the demands of the world to living for obeying God’s commands. A change of a value system in other words. That is why Jesus also empowered them and so they drove out many demons and healed many sick people [13]. In this way the words they spoke could be established. Which we now have as written in the bible.

Though we may share the gospel, we cannot expect everyone to accept it. Most especially the message of repentance. Also we do not have to give up in advance for fear that they may all reject us. Some accept the message of the gospel, some reject it. We therefore do not have to appease or flatter those who do not accept it. We should also not neglect those who do accept it, rather we should take them as precious and help them to the end. And those who reject, we should treat them boldly and clearly. May we not depend on man and expect him to do something, but rather believe in God and boldly preach the gospel. Amen!

I remember while doing my PhD in Canada, I led and organized group bible studies on campus and we had a day were we would go and share the gospel. It would happen oftentimes happened that we get rejections. One day this student even told me that I should not be on campus talking about God because, such people do not belong at a university but at some retarded places. He said that a University is a place were people think and use their minds and religious people basically empty in their brains. And so I should actually leave. Though one would experience rejection, somehow it really helped strength my faith because in a rejection I could learn deeply learn the hearts of students and their struggles. More importantly, I could relate with Jesus, who said in Matthew 5:11, “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.” However, some few years after I started working at the University, I find myself very busy with work, if you actually see me on campus you will see a man walking in the speed of light. I have forsaken the sharing of the gospel with campus students. This behavior is robbing me of understanding other’s deed seated struggles and more importantly, it is robbing me of knowing and associating with Jesus. Jesus did not raise me to be a minister of his word to others only on Sundays and during bible study times. It is a life call and so it is my prayer that, I may repent of fearing failure and rejection, however embrace rejection so that I may grow as genuine shepherd who loves Jesus and Jesus sheep. I know there are some members who once a week go on campus to share the gospel. They do this not because anyone told them to, but out of conviction of Jesus command. I am thankful of their service and response to Jesus command. May their evangelistic work continue to train them to grow as genuine shepherds of God’s flock and faith in God, Amen.

In conclusion, Jesus was trained his disciples very well, he was now raising them into the apostolic ministry. An apostle, speaks with all the authority of the one he represents. The disciples were given authority to preach the message of repentance and power to do miracles and drive out evil spits. Firstly, Jesus showed them how he was rejected so they too may not be discouraged when they face rejection and persecution from those who refuse to accept the message. Secondly, Jesus taught them how to depend on God for provision, an that indeed God provides to those who serve His work. Thirdly, they could learn not to depend on man, but trust God who provides in His way. The disciples delivered the message of repentance without compromise. Though they were young, there was a great work of God through them. They shepherded needy people one by one as Jesus did. When they simply obeyed what Jesus told them to do, the power of God worked mightily through them. Learning and practice are both necessary. Being with Jesus and being sent out are both essential. When we do both, we can grow as healthy Christians. Jesus does not want us to remain as spectators, but to be effective servants for his kingdom purpose. Amen.