

Are You Sent?  
Mark 6:1-13  
July 5, 2015

*Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When 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, that he even does miracles! Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. 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. 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." They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*

Have you been called to be a missionary? Have you been called to take God's Word to unbelieving people? If you've been called to be a Christian, you've been called to be a missionary. That's what today's Gospel reading is all about.

In today's reading, Jesus calls his disciples to himself. Notice Jesus doesn't tell them, "Here's what I want you to do. I want you to come to church on Sunday, drop your offering in the plate and go home." No. Jesus tells them to get busy spreading the Gospel.

Furthermore, take note that Jesus doesn't tell some of them to be missionaries and the rest to be ordinary disciples. All that are called are called to the same life of witnessing, the same life of spreading the good news, the same life of service to their Savior. So, Christian, are you called to be a missionary? Absolutely.

Well, if we're all called to be missionaries, we'd better be certain of what this call involves. It's lucky for us there isn't a long list of things that one must remember and act upon to be a missionary for Jesus. In fact, being a missionary requires only one thing. And this one thing is what keeps most of Christ's missionaries out of the mission field. This one thing is unconditional commitment.

Scary words unconditional commitment. Especially for us Americans. You see, we like to be in charge. We like being number one. And we don't mind unconditional commitment if it's to ourselves. But unconditional commitment to someone else is quite another story. Even if that someone else is God.

Unconditional commitment to God means that what we think and what we want doesn't

matter if it's not in line with what God thinks and wants. Unconditional commitment means that, like the disciples in the story, God doesn't want us concerned with where we live, what we eat, what we wear, what toys we have. Unconditional commitment means he's number one and we fall in somewhere behind that. Unconditional commitment means "Thy will be done!"

We hear a lot of talk about the will of God. If you ask ten people what the will of God is, you might get twelve answers. In truth, God has only one will. It's God's will that his Church grow and his lost children be found. Or as Paul writes, it's God's will that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.

That being said, it would seem that God's will is mission work. Jesus called his disciples and sent them out as missionaries. His last words to them were, "Go and make disciples of all nations." That's mission work.

Just as Jesus called those disciples to be missionaries, he has also called you and me to be missionaries. And just as he wanted unconditional commitment from the original twelve, he wants unconditional commitment from us. Unconditional commitment to carrying his word to a dead and dying world. God wants you to be a missionary. And where's the mission field where you're to serve? Wherever you happen to be at the moment.

Since you may have never had any missionary training, let me give you a quick course in being a missionary of Christ's love.

**First, submit everything in your life to Christ.** That means that nothing in your life can come between you and your Lord or his mission. That doesn't mean that you have to loose everything to serve God, but it does mean that you have to be willing to loose everything.

The disciples in today's reading left with absolutely nothing. They walked away with just a staff, no food, no money, not even a change of clothing. Their actions tell us that their love for Christ and his Word superceded everything else in their lives.

**The next step to being a missionary is to adopt the ways of Jesus.** Jesus said you must be holy just as God is holy. Now that's a pretty tall order. In fact, it's the tallest order of them all, and you can only do it with the help of the Holy Spirit. So you should pray every day for the Spirit to help you love your neighbor as yourself, and that includes the neighbors who try so hard to be unlovable.

Pray for the courage to be as humble as Christ. To return good for evil and love for hurt. And pray for the strength to say with Jesus, "Get behind me, Satan," and turn your back on the sinful temptations of the Devil, this world, and your own sinful flesh. Doing all of these things can be the most powerful sermons an unbeliever ever hears.

**You must also be willing to do the earthly work of Jesus.** You have to have the courage to stand for what is right no matter what the opposition or cost. You have to be willing to call a spade a spade; to call stealing wrong even if it's just a pen from work, to call gossip wrong even if it's true, to call fighting and backbiting among Christians wrong, to call murdering unborn children wrong.

You have to be willing to call Jesus Lord in the public square as well as in Church. You have to feed the hungry, visit the sick, care for the homeless, and preach the Gospel to the lost.

Now hear this, you don't do this to make a big splash and be noticed or praised. You do this because your first concern is for the truth of God and the eternal salvation of your neighbor. You do this because God wants his Church to grow and his lost children to be found, and you want what God wants.

**When you're doing all this, you will be sharing the cross of Christ.** Jesus talked about taking up your cross and following him. Being a missionary for Christ isn't generally a popular job. The world isn't real keen about active Christians. And, after all, missionaries are just active Christians.

To paraphrase something Jesus asked his disciples, "If this is how they treat me, how do you think they'll treat you?" But you can't let the attitudes and opinions of others sway you from your Lord's work. You can't let the cross scare you into silence and inaction. The cross of Christ is the sign of victory not the sign of defeat. But at the same time don't think that removes the cross – because a cross is still a cross. Following Christ is no cakewalk.

By now you might be thinking, "Hey, is there an up side to this missionary thing?" Before I answer that question, let's review one important fact. Doing all the things I just talked about won't save you. You're saved by grace, through faith and not by works – not even the works of a class "A" missionary of Christ.

You're saved because Jesus lived a perfect life and died a sinner's death in your place. You don't become a missionary for Christ to gain God's favor. You become a missionary for Christ because you already have God's favor.

You see, the disciples didn't spend their lives pointing others to Christ in order to earn salvation. They knew they had salvation. And that's why they did all the things they did. They spent their lives in the service to others as a response to what had been done for them.

What Jesus did for them he has also done for you. Jesus died for his disciples, he died for all of you, and he died for everyone in the world. The problem is that most of the people in the world don't know that.

It's God's plan that his kingdom grow through the missionary activities of his people. That was Jesus' plan when he sent out his first twelve flawed, scared, backsliding, doubting, sometimes downright obstinate disciples. And that was Jesus' plan when he chose you to be his missionary.

God doesn't ask you to be perfect, just be a witness, a missionary. You don't have to have the eloquence of the best preacher or the sinless life of the most holy saint. All you need is the love of Jesus in your heart and the desire to share his love with someone else.

It is my utmost prayer that you answer God's missionary call by doing your best and letting God take care of the rest.