

Mark 6:1-13

6He left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. ²On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! ³Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offence at him. ⁴Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.' ⁵And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. ⁶And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. ⁷He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰He said to them, 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.' ¹²So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. ¹³They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Mark 6:1-13 **Empower Servant Leadership**
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“Jesus left that place...” that place is where we left off last week. As Jesus criss crossed the Lake of Galilee he ended up back in Jewish territory. In the previous chapter Jesus raised the 12 year old girl back to life and healed the woman who had been suffering for 12 years. Now the time had come to send out the 12 disciples. Up until this point the disciples have been the ones who lacked faith. Day in and day out with Rabbi Jesus has turned the disciples around, their faith has grown stronger. Jesus is developing servant leaders who will continue the mission. Empowering servant leadership is the focus of our VCI study today. It's one of the 7 marks of VCI. The biblical lesson for our study after worship is an example of empowering servant leadership from the Old Testament. The story of Jethro, father-in-law of Moses, is telling Moses to start delegating. Delegating, leadership development, and sharing responsibility had been Jesus' plan all along from the calling of the first disciples. Building relationships, teaching and training takes a huge time investment. In Jesus' situation discipling for these first disciples was a three-year apprenticeship with intensive on the job training 24/7 with Jesus'.

The cold reception Jesus received in his hometown prompted Jesus to take action and not waste resources on people who have hardened their hearts so he takes the

disciples on tour around other villages and gave them authority to go out in pairs preaching and teaching.

Jesus had returned home primarily to visit mom and the rest of the family: James, Justus, Judah, Simon and the unnamed sisters. Joseph may have died many years previous to this and that event may have been one of the reasons Jesus lived at home until he was 30 years old to provide for his mother.

Familiarity within his family has grown around love and care for each other.

Familiarity in the community on the other hand has bred contempt. The people in his hometown have heard of his great deeds and wonders and were even themselves astounded at his teaching in the synagogue. Then the crowd turned on him and took offense at him. What is something he said? Was it because of his family of origin? The birth status rules of their culture? Was it his claim to be the Messiah that did not meet with their expectation of Messiah?

Their minds could not go beyond the fact that Jesus was a carpenter from Nazareth. The “all too familiar” kept them from seeing the new thing God was doing in their midst. The locals just couldn’t see how this kid who grew up in Nazareth could be anything other than the son of Mary. To justify their unbelief they became naysayers with a negative attitude. A spirit of adversity had set in.

The offense is against Jesus. Jesus takes no offense and gives as good as he gets. He always gives better by speaking the truth in love. He quotes a well-known saying from the Jewish and Greco-Roman world, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house”. Jesus could do no deed of power there. Jesus was not only ignored but also rejected just as the people had rejected God’s prophets before him.

We all fear rejection. Even sharing the good news of Jesus Christ is so scary for some of us because we fear people will reject us. Some have preconceived ideas of what evangelism is and valid reasons to shy away based on bad experiences of being evangelized ourselves. The very thought can make us uncomfortable. A couple of weeks ago we had a conversation about the “E” word, being an evangelist. I heard a lot of talk about caring relationships and doing good deeds and getting out in community to show God’s love and that is right on! Absolutely! We need to take up the Matthew 25 challenge and you are doing that! But if that is all we do then we are just another social services agency. Deeds and words go together: mission and proclamation. Jesus met people where they were, and healed them of their ailments or demons and then pointed them toward relationship with God, the Giver of Life.

Relationships are not easy. Friendships, committed partnerships, marriages, small groups must begin with respectful communication. Good relationships require respect and mutual understanding and a mutual sharing. Our most important relationship is with God. Our goal is to grow in God’s love not contempt. As followers of Christ when we abide in him we will grow more Christ-like and God will empower us for servant leadership.

In today's lesson the disciples are given clear instructions on how to cope with rejection and are given instruction on the kind of attitude they were to bring to the situation or circumstance. If they were offered hospitality they were to accept it and not hold out for a better offer.

When the disciples were not welcomed but ignored and rejected, when the doors, and eyes, and ears were closed to their message, Jesus told them to shake the dust off their feet. This was a common practice and the law at the time which stated that the dust of a Gentile country was unclean. Jesus is saying if our people are not receptive to your message let them keep their dust. Leave it there or leave them in the dust because there are others who are waiting to hear some good news who will be more receptive.

I have to admit there is something quite satisfying when you shake the dust off your feet in response to rejection. Ever done that? I remember the time I intentionally practiced what I'm calling this body prayer of dealing with rejection. After a couple of interviews with one church I didn't get the job although I was clearly the best candidate so when I left the building, I shook the dust off my feet. I didn't just shake the dust off I stomped with two feet and immediately felt better.

Jesus teaches us how to cope with rejection and keep a positive attitude. When we face rejection, we are not to take the rejection personally. Jesus asks, "Do you want to be healed?" Of course we care and we can continue to pray for healing but the reality is we are dealing with a broken world and a world of hurt that we may know nothing about in our encounters with others.

The disciples went out and proclaimed that all should repent. Repent has different meanings. We've come across this Greek word for repent before: *metanoia*, means turning around, going beyond the mind we have, a redirection, a change in attitude, being open to hearing the good news of God's love.

In our good news conversations this change or repentance happens through the action of the Spirit. And once our mind is changed then we must act in a changed way. Our behaviour must fit the new creation we are in Christ. The deeds must match the words. We are not responsible for how people respond to our acts of compassion, message of good news, and tough love.

We are responsible only for our own faithfulness and obedience to Jesus' teaching.

We cannot give someone faith but let's not be fearful about sharing our faith and the wonderful testimonies we hear when we gather each week. We are not to be silent on who Jesus is for us?

On Palm Sunday when Jesus entered Jerusalem and there was much rejoicing he was told to control his disciples, Jesus response was, "I tell you if these should keep silent, the stones will cry out."

God is here and with us wherever we go, we are part of Christ's body we call church. We are invited, and to be inviting, participation. When you are sent from here today to love and serve God do so with good deeds and good words and give the rest to God. Amen.

Sources: Feasting on the Word, Year B, Vol. 2
The Gospel of Mark by William Barclay
New Interpreter's Bible Vol IIX

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