

Rev. Seth D. Bode † Sermon 275 † Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

“Lord God, you have appointed me as a Bishop and Pastor in your Church, but you see how unsuited I am to meet so great and difficult a task. If I had lacked your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore, I call upon you: I wish to devote my mouth and my heart to you; I shall teach the people. I myself will learn and ponder diligently upon your Word. Use me as your instrument -- but do not forsake me, for if ever I should be on my own, I would easily wreck it all.”

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE

Gospel of the Day – Mark 6

⁷Jesus called the Twelve and began to send them out two by two. He gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸He instructed them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their money belts. ⁹They were to put on sandals but not to wear two coats. ¹⁰He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that area. ¹¹Any place that will not receive you or listen to you, as you leave there, shake off the dust that is under your feet as a testimony against them.”

¹²They went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³They also drove out many demons. They anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.



INTRO: Going on vacation, anyone? When you go, what can't you go without? Suntan lotion? Or aloe, if you forgot the lotion? Clorox wipes for those parts of the plane or hotel that others have touched all over? Hand sanitizer? Wet ones? Someone said her acrostic puzzles, another person her Swiss army knife? Someone from New Orleans said toe tape for dancers; “a blister from walking can ruin everything.” Someone from Los Angeles said a can of smoked oysters, “in case he gets hungry on the plane.” Someone said her lavender essential oil; “it helps her relax and fall asleep” in an unfamiliar place.

On vacation, what can't you go without? Maybe it's simply something you always forget. Maybe it's the medication that keeps you breathing. Maybe it's the basics, like a toothbrush and toothpaste. Maybe we can't go without all three of those things: The thing that we always forget, that keeps us alive, that's very basic: God's good news.

You know what's funny is that we pray, “Thy kingdom come.” Then, when we go someplace, we leave the good news of God's kingdom behind. We get so wrapped up in where we might go, what we might wear, what we might do, what we'll need when we get there, that it can crowd out our most basic need, that which gives us life and breath.

God's good news is what the disciples took with them, the authority of Jesus – Jesus' answer to whomever they would meet. If our life is a journey, to which we are called by the voice and Gospel of Jesus Christ, then it's good for us to see how, no matter what we take with us ...

God's Good News Goes

1. It covers ground.

It doesn't stand still. It cannot. For the Twelve friends of Jesus, this was properly their commissioning into the public ministry. But they were not expected to battle flesh and blood enemies. They were not called into physical warfare, to attack the Jews or Romans. When He called these men to action,

Jesus did not give these men swords or spears, bows and arrows, shields or shirts of mail. These Twelve brought with them only the authority of Jesus over the rampant demons afflicting the people of Galilee. They brought with them the miracles of Jesus. They would be going against the devil, sin, death, disease, and everything that belongs to sin's result. This battle between God's kingdom and the sinners' truest enemies was intended so that the sinners who were healed might recognize that the kingdom of God was spiritual, not of this world. The Twelve disciples' equipment was simply Jesus' power and authority.

So the Twelve weren't much to look at. They weren't fashionable. Jesus had them take nothing except a staff. No billfold, no briefcase, no man-purse, and no fanny pack for carrying things. No extra clothes.

In keeping their preparation and protection simple, God was teaching them to get going and cover ground. There was some urgency in the good news, and it needed to serve its purpose. It was time to get going and cover ground.

So often we Christians wonder if we're ready to share the message of Jesus. Have we prepared enough? Is the timing just right? Are we equipped with the right weapons to battle the devil's forces? Instead, we worry and wait so long that we miss our opportunities to simply go and tell. God's good news goes. God's good news doesn't wait around like that, and it certainly doesn't worry what happens next. God's good news brings its own opportunities and coincidences, if they can be called coincidences, that put our worries in check. Even today's Christians are equipped with what we need to cover ground. God's good news is stuck in our heart. We have it here as a treasure. We are all equipped to do the work of God Jesus sent us to do. But it doesn't sit still. God's good news is restless, like a fire in our heart, a fire set up in our bones. We get weary of holding it in (Jer. 20:9).

Twelve disciples divided into twos would only need to cover about four or five square miles to get into all of Galilee. In a certain sense, once the Twelve came to a house, they would need to have the right attitude and state of mind. So another fact about the good news of God as it goes is that ...

2. It stands its ground.

When these pairs of disciples did make it to a person's house, if they were invited in, they would stay there until their work in that place was finished. This is where Jesus expected people to take the men into their home and give them room and board, and so God would have them cared for. But if these men were rejected, they would need to have the right attitude. Through all of this possibility of people accepting them or rejecting them, the Twelve would learn what to say, what to expect, and what to do. Ministers of the Word need that ability, to learn themselves, find confidence when people may accept them or reject them, and discover what kind of men they would be. As they brought God's good news, they would trust in it, and it would stand its ground when they felt shaky or ashamed, testy or foolish.

So Jesus was calling each of His Twelve friends to a certain attitude. They were to be sincere. With so little to hold onto, the Twelve would show there was no room for greed, for simony, and for self-seeking. Jesus Christ forbade magnificence, wantonness, and excess. They would teach the countryside of Galilee with sincerity, not for glory or gain or human favor or handouts. When the disciples might fear they had left all behind, the fact was that God's good news was stuck in their heart. They had it there as a treasure. They would all be equipped to do the work of God Jesus sent them to do. They were to trust God for their daily bread, that His eye was on the sparrow and so it was on every hair of their head. They were to trust God for His protection, so that the Twelve were not to plan ahead. They would look not to things that spoil but instead to God's Word alone.

It has to be this way. Whoever would answer the Savior's call and bring His authority and good news must look to the Word alone. Whoever would answer the Savior's call and bring His authority and good news must know that it's never an easy task. After Jesus ascended and these Twelve were persecuted, they would strengthen each other's souls with these words, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Acts 14:22). They would have the steadiness to go to their own crosses and deaths by stone just to persist in the Savior's message. They would finally understand the kingdom of God belongs to a child-like faith which trusts in what we cannot see.

Even in rejection would these pairs of disciples not become discouraged. Yes, they were supposed to shake the dust off their feet as a testimony "to" those who sent them out. But I'm not so sure the Greek word means a testimony "against" the unwelcoming party. The point was not that Jesus' friends would become angered or desire revenge. The point was that they would have pity on the ones rejecting them and not give up. They would move on and teach, and in the act suggest to those who wouldn't welcome the disciples that they've already been punished more than they could wish. Rejecting Jesus' friends meant rejecting the God of love and the Savior of all humanity. It wouldn't be the last time they shook the dust off. The synagogue officials would put them out in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:51) and in Corinth (Acts 18:6). This proves that the Twelve were not deterred by any early rejection. God's good news stood its ground ... and continued to go.

3. It gains ground.

Success came in the form of visible results. The authority of Jesus was well-received, we might say. Many houses were cleaned from their demon-possession. Many bodies were healed. There was reverence for the authority of Jesus and there was repentance over sin.

For the good news of God is like the flow of lava. Have you heard about the Kilawea volcano that has been erupting since May 3? It has destroyed 657 homes since, including the mayor's. This week an upper channel become blocked. But that doesn't mean the lava stopped. It means the lava begins to flow in a new direction. There's no way to stop lava. It has been tried. Massive cannon-sized pumps were used to spray lava in Iceland with seawater in 1973. Explosive bombs from military planes were attempted in Hilo in 1935. There is no point in jersey walls or other concrete barriers, because lava is sticky as syrup and denser than cement. It does not stop, it can only take new direction. God's good news also cannot be stopped. It may take new direction. It may not produce the happiest response, since sinners by nature respond poorly to God's Word. But God's good news always goes.

Trusting and confident, Jesus did both cover ground and stand ground. He did not forget anything in His trip to save sinners. He brought the Holy Spirit with His teaching and He looked to the Father for protecting and providing. He journeyed into the valley of the shadow of death for us and He spoke life into the suffering and the sinning. There was no deceit in His mouth or malice in His hands. So He covered ground. On trial, when questioned, He stood His ground as the Son of God. And Jesus gained ground on the devil without even really looking like it by dying on our behalf. When the sun seemed to set on this dark thing, the death of the Son of God, it rose the third day with death's defeat and the victory of those who would trust in Him.

- On this rock Christ would build His church and the gates of Hades cannot overcome it or even withstand it (Matt. 16).
- God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe (1 Cor. 1).
- Heaven and earth shall pass away, but Jesus promises His Word will never pass away (Matt. 24).

Now is this good news sitting on the shelf, spoiling in your hands, and are you simply savoring it on your tongue? Or does it go? Does it go with you wherever? Does it go with you on vacation, cherished in your heart? Is it going to bubble over into your language and your life as you let your

light shine before others? God grant that we be like the Twelve. As God calls us to our vocations, may we bear His Word.

Amen.