

Mark 6:7-13

Dear Christian Friends,

Our final lesson has both a specific message for those who have been called to publicly proclaim his Word as well as for the personal ministry that all of us have as believers. It was true for the apostles and it remains true for all of us here today: We share Jesus by sharing his Word. This is going to mean two things: We can expect the rejection that comes from sharing His Word. We can expect to see His Power at work.

Jesus was just rejected in his home town. People who knew him his whole life and listened to God's Word in the synagogue with him just could not believe that he was who he was proclaiming to be. They became so angry that they were ready to throw him off a cliff. It would be a valuable lesson for his disciples as they would face the same hatred for sharing Jesus. We read:

⁷**Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.** Jesus knew all too well that being rejected as the people's Savior was not pleasant. He was literally surprised and undoubtedly saddened at the lack of faith among the people of his home town, even after all those years listening to the Word together. Sadly, that rejection would continue. So, Jesus lovingly prepares the Twelve by sending them out in twos. This way, they could encourage one another especially when they were rejected.

Even today, pastors gather together to encourage one another. When God's Word seems to fall on deaf and lifeless ears, it's not easy. When so much time and effort is put into sharing Jesus and the results don't seem to be as big or timely as we had hoped, there is no better encouragement than a fellow Pastor to remind you that it is God the Holy Spirit who changes hearts, not ourselves. He will not let his words fall to the ground, ineffective.

This kind of encouragement is important for all of us. Maybe you have tried sharing Jesus with someone and you just felt so alone in doing so... like you were the only one who has had rejection slap them in the face... or the only one who feels afraid of meeting that rejection. It's one thing to know that Jesus is always by your side, but it sure is encouraging to hear a brother or sister in Christ remind you of that truth. And guess what? Look around you! These men, women and kids are here every week to encourage you. They are your partners in sharing Jesus. Think you have a situation unlike anyone else? Ask around and you will be surprised to find that you are in the same boat as a lot of your brothers and sisters in Christ. However, that encouragement will never be yours if you do not get to know one another. Why wouldn't we... a whole room full of people who've got your back... what a gift!

For a Christian, rejection isn't all about the shame of being told to get lost or being flat out ignored. If we are truly sharing Jesus and his Word, the hardest part of being rejected is that Jesus is being rejected and as a result someone has brought serious harm on themselves. Jesus told his disciples that it will be worse for such a person or town when he returns than it will be for the people of Sodom and Gomorrah.

As you know the people of Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed on account of their unrepentant wickedness. Jesus tells us that it will be worse for someone who had the Word proclaimed to them, but rejected it anyway. For such a person or community he said, **"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."** At first glance we might view this as pouting and angrily slamming the door on our way out, but that wasn't the idea at all. It was a final attempt at a much needed warning. The thinking was this: *"We were here with the message of peace that only Jesus can give. But you would not listen, because you despised the very gospel message that saves you. If that's the way you want it, then we leave the dust of your town behind us to testify to you: 'You have rejected the message of salvation. Repent while you have time!'"*

If you would ever persistently reject Jesus and his Word, know that a faithful pastor is not going to hesitate to warn you... and even quite sternly. It is a matter of your eternity. Likewise, when any of us meet persistent rejection of Jesus, how can we say nothing! Warn that person, so they too will repent and believe.

Notice that Jesus is the one who calls the disciples to himself and instructs them in what to do and what to say. Jesus does not send anyone out to proclaim his Word without first calling them to faith in himself and instructing them. He offers us himself... all that he is and all that he has to give. If he didn't do this, how could we share him? He shares himself with us now even more clearly than he had at this point with his disciples. He welcomes us sinners with open arms and that means something because at the end of those arms are those nail

pierced hands that prove he really paid for our every last sin. Now he actually wants us to be his disciples! He gives us himself in his Word and in his Holy Supper, just as he says, “for the forgiveness of sins.” There he says, now you have peace with God.

Since it is Jesus who instructs us what to say, we can be confident and fully expect that as we share his message, we will see his power at work. On the other hand, if we are following our own instructions, we can expect to see only our limited power at work. Jesus instructed his apostles:

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 tunic. ¹⁰Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.

These might seem like odd instructions, but all of it was meant to help them trust God’s power to provide everything they needed from their wellbeing to the message on their lips. They were not doing this for financial gain. Anyone could preach what people wanted to hear and make a bunch of money. The message Jesus sent them out with would not bring in the dollars. They were not doing it to enjoy the best lodging either. If the one who welcomed them into their home lived in not much more than a shack, that was where they were to stay gladly.

There are many pastors out there these days. You want to find one who is concerned about the message that he has to bring you, more than his own personal wealth and comfort. Furthermore, you want a pastor who has been called and instructed by Christ, not by his own whim... not swayed by what seems to be popular at the time. Striving to tell people what their itching ears want to hear comes only from a personal desire for power and popularity, not a desire to see Christ’s power at work. For example, it is popular right now for pastors and theologians to teach people that homosexuality is part of God’s design for marriage, too. It is popular to say that there is no such thing as absolute truth... that truth is whatever you want it to be.

What did these apostles proclaim since they were instructed by Christ himself? Their message was in lock step with what Jesus proclaimed. **¹²They went out and preached that people should repent.** Here Mark is using the word “repent” in the broad sense, which includes both sorrow over sin, and turning from despair over our sin to Christ and his forgiveness instead. This message is a message of authority and power. This is why. If the apostles proclaimed what Christ himself proclaimed, then they didn’t have to say, “Well, the way I see it..., what I have come to think on this is, etc.” Instead, they could simply say, “This is what the Lord says!

The apostles were given the ability to perform miracles and heal people, which is not surprising since those were things that Jesus did at the time also. But even then, it was a display of Christ’s power, not theirs.

When we share Jesus by sharing his Word, people are not just going to be excited about Jesus for a moment and then, when life gets better, forget all about him. That happens when we share our own version of Jesus’ Word... the kind that proclaims prosperity in this world. That kind of message rightly loses its power in an instant. However, when we preserve and protect Jesus’ Word and share it faithfully, there you see his power at work. An atheist despairing in himself and clinging to Christ for eternal life, thus changing the way they look at everything in this world. Husbands loving their wives the way Christ loves his Church. Wives serving their husbands out of joy, not out of fear. Children respecting their parents’ insisting on hearing the Word. People in everyday life blowing others away with kindness that is neither earned nor deserved, because they know what it is like to deserve hell and be given heaven instead.

It is easy for us to say only the things that will not cause offense. We could make and keep way more friends if we never talked about Jesus. We would be much more popular if we pretended that pretty much everyone who lives in America believes in Jesus as their Savior from sin, death, and hell simply because our money says, “In God we trust.” So, maybe we don’t add to God’s Word, but we leave things out here and there. We say, Jesus loves you, but don’t really want to say why that is something that we need more than anything else in this whole world!

Christ’s greatest power is still present in his believers today as they proclaim that same message their Savior did – We are damned sinners, in need of a Savior... Jesus is that only Savior and he lived, died, and rose again for me so that all who believe in Him will not perish because of their sins, but have eternal life. I don’t know how many times I have heard Christians say that they already know the basics and are looking for something deeper. This is the message that changes people’s eternities. Jesus didn’t think that this message was

old hat and stale and not deep enough for us to keep on proclaiming. What is more profound and more powerful than the fact that God loved us when we hated him and sacrificed his Son to change our eternity forever! That simple message impacts every aspect of our lives in this world and all of our eternity.

Friends, when it comes to our sharing Jesus we can only do so by sharing his Word. That's not always the easier thing to share, but it is the most powerful and effective thing to share. That Word is proclaimed through the Bible and the Bible's working in our thoughts, words and actions every day. When we proclaim that Word, we can expect to be rejected, but we can also expect to see Jesus' amazing power at work through it. Amen.