

Mark
Chapter 6:1-44
“Step One ... Step Up ... Step Out”
All scripture references are from the NASU unless otherwise noted

Calvary Chapel Fellowship of Enid
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Announcement:

Teaching:

Last week as we parted ways, Jesus was still ministering in Capernaum, but now He heads to his hometown of Nazareth ... about a 40 mile trip to the southwest.

The Lord continues His ministry to the public, but we see Him begin to focus a bit more on the spiritual growth of those who are following Him as He begins to prepare them for their own individual ministries.

Verse 1: Just a note ... when it says here that “**His disciples followed Him**” ... don’t get a picture of Jesus and twelve little ducklings. When we get down to **verse 7**, we’ll read that there He calls the twelve from among this crowd of disciples.

So this group of disciples in **verse 1** is probably hundreds of men who wanted to learn what He had to teach them and had a desire to follow in His ways.

Verses 2-3: A couple of things ... because the people refer to Him here as the “**son of Mary**”, it indicates to us that His earthly father, Joseph has already passed away.

And that becomes a point of importance as we look to the life example of Jesus. Because as the oldest son, Jesus would have become responsible for the family when Joseph died. And since His public ministry didn’t begin in earnest until He was 30 years old, it would indicate to us that He took that responsibility very seriously and yet we know that He didn’t allow it to interfere with the mission His Heavenly Father had given Him.

And yet this group of people took offense at Him. The word used here is skandalizo (skan-dal-id’-zo). And it means to trip up or stumble. These people knew Him as their neighbor Jesus, but now they’re being asked to know Him as God incarnate and they were tripped up.

Verse 4: And Jesus says that not only did the residents of His hometown disbelieve, but so did His distant relatives and, at least at this point, even His own household thought He had gone crazy.

I would love to know what Mary had told her other children about the Lord at this point.

Q. You thought the birds and the bees were a challenging discussion ... how do you tell your sons and daughters that the brother sitting next to them at the dinner table is God?

Of course we know that James and Jude went on, not only to believe in Him, but to do great things in His name including each of them writing a book in the New Testament.

Verses 5-6: It's as simple as the people not coming to Jesus for healing because they didn't believe in Him. They had to come to Him in order to be healed just as we do.

So He could do few miraculous healings because those who were willing to believe and receive were few and far between in His hometown.

If I gave you a million dollars and sent you to Walmart, but when you get there you discover that they no longer have anything to sell. Every shelf is empty -- how much could you buy at Walmart? Obviously you could buy nothing, but it wouldn't be because of a lack of buying power -- you've got a million dollar bill hanging out of your pocket.

In like manner -- Jesus had all the power in Heaven and earth, but this unbelieving people of Nazareth were not coming to the Lord for healings or other miracles.

So this is a great example of ordinary life. A cross-section of society. At the same time Jesus is being sought after and pressed to exhaustion by some ... He's being utterly rejected by others. The Pharisees and the Sadducees and now those from His hometown and family.

Some will believe and some will refuse.

Verses 7-13: Before we jump into the message of the text here ... let me insert a side note for those of you who are wondering why I didn't read all the words that are in your Bible. **Verse 11** in the Old and New King James versions ends with Jesus saying "**Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.**" KJV

But most newer translations don't include that statement.

Q. Why? – Textus Recepticus. The manuscript collection that was the mainstay of the 1611 King James Bible, but was largely set aside by the translators of most of the newer versions because by that time, we had manuscripts that predated the Textus Recepticus and in the world of ancient literature ... the oldest is generally considered to be the most accurate.

Textus Recepticus includes this phrase from the Lord, but the oldest manuscripts do not

and so ... your King James includes it, but my NASB has left it off. Although ... I think it's included in all the manuscripts and translations in **Matthew's Gospel**.

But as to the text ... there is a transition that begins to take place here. It's simply the next step in the spiritual journey of the twelve. For them specifically it was the transition from disciple to apostle.

And they are granted authority over unclean spirits.

Q. Now ... are we given that same authority? – No.

Many will say that **Acts 1:8**, which is a promise given to the church, is the same, but it's not. Let's read it together ...

Acts 1:8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

The church is given "power" to be His witnesses. The word there is dunamis (doo'-nam-is) and it means power or force. It's a reference to the available power of the Holy Spirit. So the power is not granted to us, but access to it is.

But what Jesus says to the disciples here is different. He says to them that they are granted authority ... exousia (ex-oo-see'-ah). It's a word that means the delegation of authority. And this authority was delegated to this group of twelve, but it's not a promise that was ever repeated to the church.

So don't buy it when people quote those two verses together or tell you that the church was given authority over evil spirits. Not so!

But we see here a progression of the Christian walk that does apply to us. At first, the Lord had His disciples close by His side to learn. Then He began to engage them in ministry ... but still they were by His side where He could watch them. And now finally we see them heading out on their own, but always with that necessary attachment to Christ as we'll see all the way up in **verse 30**.

And our walk should show a similar progression. A time of learning ... and then serving the Lord under observation ... today that generally means in the church where you can be watched and disciplined ... and then ultimately, stepping out and serving Christ in your life outside of the church as well.

But notice also that even at that point He instructed them to go in pairs. It provides for spiritual strength as well as for accountability and is a principle that ought to generally be observed when possible.

Q. Now ... what's this business about shaking the dust off their feet? – It's a saying

... a gesture that was common in that region and era.

Paul and Barnabas did it in more than one of the Galatian cities that rejected them. We read in ...

Acts 13:51 But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.

Now this is not to say that God's done reaching out to those individuals. Not at all, but it does teach us that there can come a time when God releases us from our responsibility of ministry toward certain individuals or even certain groups.

Q. Now the all important question is when does that happen? How many times do they have to reject you before you're released? – I have no idea. I see nothing in scripture that would indicate to us that there's a certain timeframe to this ... it is Spirit led and case by case.

But I think the saying also includes an aspect of encouragement. It's kind of like saying, "Shake it off". You may have heard a boxing coach encourage his fighter "Shake it off" when they get their bell rung. It means don't let that blow slow you down. Shake off the crud and the cobwebs and jump right back into the fight.

Q. And how about the Lord's instructions to them as He sends them out? -- Wear sandals and one shirt and take no other provision with you?

I think that becomes especially perplexing when you remember that the next time the Lord instructed them He said ...

Luke 22:36 ... "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one.

What it's saying to us is that the first time Jesus sent them out ... He wasn't primarily sending them out to engage in some incredible ministry, but to grow them up as ministers ... in preparation for incredible ministry.

They needed to see God's faithfulness and learn to rely upon Him and not men or money or might.

Jesus called the disciples, He gave them a season to be sponges, but then ... then it was time to step up and eventually time to step out.

Jesus simply chose 12 messed up guys - equipped them and sent them out.

Verses 14-16: The first thing that I want you to see here is whose name had become well known ... it wasn't the name of some minister who was preaching in His name and it wasn't the name of some ministry or church ... it was the name of Jesus Christ. May that

be true for us today!

So as his name is spread abroad people begin speculating about who He is, but when Herod Antipas hears about Him, he instantly gets a bit edgy and thinks that John the Baptist has come back to get him.

But to make sense of it all we need the rest of the story. The Readers Digest version is that Herod (this is Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod The Great), took his older brother Phillip's wife, Herodias. This was a bad deal to begin with though, because Phillip (her first husband) was also her uncle which makes Antipas his brother and her new husband ... her other uncle.

Anyway - she left Phillip and married his brother Antipas and when she moved into his palace she brought with her a daughter that she had while married to Phillip. So this "daughter" was Antipas' niece and stepdaughter.

And John the Baptist had done what he was called to do. He scolded Antipas and Herodias for their improper marriage and as we'll see, at least, Herodias did not receive this criticism very well.

Verses 17-29: Herodias is said to have been the most beautiful and sensual woman in the land. But as beautiful as she may have been on the outside ... she was equally ugly on the inside.

And she had obviously trained her daughter, to follow in her footsteps. This was no tap-dance or ballet that this young girl was performing. This was an erotic dance for all the prominent men of the region. The whole purpose was to inflame the passion of those who were watching. And she was so successful at it ... well you can see for yourself what kind of a spell it cast upon Antipas.

But the other thing that's interesting about this is that Herod Antipas wasn't a king. He was a governor, so when he says that he will give this girl "half his kingdom" it's a sadly humorous conviction of him because in reality he had no kingdom.

And I'm sure that Rome would have been thrilled to have this half drunk governor giving away their property to a belly dancer. It highlights the immense dangers of physical lust when they're allowed to be stoked outside of a dedicated marital relationship.

So anyway ... feeling guilty for ordering John's execution, Herod Antipas expresses his paranoia here by insisting that this must be John the Baptist come back to haunt him.

Verses 30-32: We are given, what I consider to be, a very important principle in this account. And that is that God does not call the equipped ... He equips the called.

He does not call people based in their equipping, but rather He equips them based on their calling.

Q. And why is this so important? Let me explain this by testimony. Starting many years ago people began telling me that I was called to pastoral ministry. For a long time I just dismissed them as crazy. Then as circumstances began unfolding in a nearly unmistakable fashion I was forced to consider that maybe these people weren't as crazy as I thought - fear set in. I was looking at the possibility of that calling with my physical eyes. I knew that I was not equipped, in fact not even capable of teaching and pastoring a church.

Q. And you know what? - I was right. I wasn't equipped or capable of those things, but God wasn't the least bit concerned about that. In fact - I was the only one that seemed to be concerned about that.

When you hear God's call - whether it's to making coffee or Children's Ministry - don't even consider whether or not you're capable - that's God's problem, not yours. If God has called you - He will give you all that you need to carry out His will.

Look what He did with these 12 incapable men!

Verses 33-44: Jesus felt compassion for these people because they were like sheep without a shepherd. They were wondering aimlessly. Their life lacked purpose and direction.

Q. So what did He do? Did He refer them to a good therapist? Did He get them into a self-help group? Did He give them a pep talk? - No. It says when He saw their need ... He began to teach them many things. He opened the scriptures to meet their need.

And from my study and experience ... that is THE answer ...

When people are confused ... teach them the scriptures.

When people are hurting ... teach them the scriptures.

When people are angry or when they're lost or when they're sinning ... teach them the scriptures.

That's what Jesus did.

And then after meeting their spiritual need ... He met their physical need as well.

It's been said that a committee is a group of people who can't do anything individually and collectively decide that nothing can be done. So I think it's of importance that it says in **verse 36** that "**they**" said to Him, "there's nothing we can do."

But Jesus takes a totally different approach and intends to teach that approach to His

disciples as well as to us.

So here it is ... they come to Him and say ... we've got a problem. We see a need and we think something should be done.

And the principle that Jesus taught His boys then and there is just as true here and now ... you see the need that you think need to be met ... then you meet that need.

Don't come pointing need out to me and expect me to meet it for you. Ninety nine percent of the time, I'm simply gonna ask you what you'd like to do about the problem or need that the Lord's pointed out to you.

Q. You need guidance or resources or permission? -- Come see me, but don't come and think that you're going to dump in my lap what the Lord has opened your eyes to. The majority of the time, I will give it back to you. And I think that's the example we see from Jesus here.

But this would have amounted to about \$15,000 worth of food. Two hundred denarii being about eight month's pay for a rural worker.

Because if there were 5,000 adult males, we're probably looking at 20,000 or so people that were fed.

And the word used here is chortazo (khor-tad'-zo) and it means to be gorged or gluttoned. It's the same way we all felt about 3pm this last Thursday ... gluttoned.

In Matthew's account of this story, we have perhaps the key phrase in all of it. As they said to Him "Jesus, all we have are five loaves and two fish", He said to them "Give it to Me." (**Matthew 14:18**)

To me this is the most powerful point of the story ... if we will give to God what we've got ... a little becomes a lot.

And not only that ... remember that the twelve disciples went away with Jesus tired and hungry. But at the end of the day ministering on His behalf ... they were too excited to be tired and they had one basket left over for each of them. Even what was left over was greater than what they started with.

Q. You wanna have more? – Then give what you've got to Jesus.

And that's not a plea for your money. It's a plea for you to give yourself ... all of yourself over to Jesus and find out that you are more than you ever thought you could be.

Because ... realize that the 20,000 people, in all likelihood, never knew what was going on. They were not a part of the original discussion about the situation ... that was just between Jesus and the disciples.

And they would not likely have been able to see that each time the disciples returned to Jesus with their baskets empty ... that He was filling those baskets from His own empty hands.

This miraculous work of compassion and provision, was not as much for the 20,000 as it was for the 12 ... as it is for me and for you.

Conclusion: We are to never stop learning and observing and we are certainly to never stop abiding with and in Christ, but as we grow ... other elements must be added to our Christian walk.

Step one ... get saved. Be born again by the power of Christ. Confess your sinfulness to Him and ask Him to forgive and receive you. Then ... begin growing. Take in the Word. Glut yourself on it. Be a sponge for an appropriate season.

Step up ... find a place to serve. Begin in the church where you can be observed and disciplined.

Step out ... ask God to bring you a ministry partner and then step out into service as the Lord leads you in the places of His choosing. Sometimes it's your neighborhood ... sometimes it's the mall and sometimes it's India.