

**Trinity Baptist Church
Sunday 2nd May 2021
All-Age Service**

Ask everyone to bring a pen and paper, and their labyrinth picture.

Props:

2x Photos of miscellaneous items

Labyrinth picture

Rucksac packed with items for an overnight hike

**Mark 6:6b-13
Jesus' Authority Passed On**

We're continuing our series in Mark's Gospel this morning – or for the children, re-joining it. Today we're reading from Mark 6:6b-13, which I will explore during the service with three "Why?" questions.

[Read Mark 6:6b-13]

6b Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. 7 Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.

8 These were his instructions: 'Take nothing for the journey except a staff – no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9 Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. 10 Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.'

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

[Pray]

1) Why did Jesus send his disciples out?

Our first "Why?" question is simple: "Why did Jesus send his *disciples* out?" Obviously, they went to preach his gospel, which was that the Kingdom of God had come near in Jesus' coming, and therefore people should repent and believe the good news. And, of course, twelve of them divided into six pairs could reach more villages than if they all went together with him. But is there more to it than that?

Put up your hand if you can remember learning to ride a bike without stabilisers for the first time – or for those who are older, if you can remember teaching your child to ride a bike. I'm guessing the routine was pretty similar. Dad or Mum or whoever cared for us removed our stabilisers. And we *watched* them do it. We may have been excited or scared or both, but we *watched*, because this was a big life moment. A flat site was selected, and our parents told us something like: "I'll hold your seat and run along with you; just keep pedalling, and you'll be alright." We got on, tried to pedal, wobbled, and put a foot down on the floor again. We did that several times. Eventually we balanced enough to keep pedalling. Our parents ran along holding our saddle, desperately trying to help us be steady enough. And then the *terrible* moment happened! They *let go* of the saddle! We may not have noticed immediately, but when we noticed, we panicked, and either put our foot down again or wobbled and fell over. Am I right? But what happened next? We tried again ... and again ... until we got it. Yes?

Now, a question: Did our parents or carers let go of our saddle because they are mean?

[Take answers]

So, why did they let go of the saddle?

[Take answers]

They let go because they cannot always run along with us holding our saddle every time we go cycling for the rest of our lives. They let go because they knew it is the only way to learn to ride a bike properly. They let go because they knew we could do this, even if we didn't quite believe it. There might be some mistakes and falls along the way. But, ultimately, they let go of the saddle so we could experience the joyful freedom of riding a bike!

We see a similar dynamic in our passage today. Jesus had demonstrated that he had authority over all sickness, evil spirits, and even death itself. But Jesus would not always be physically here on Earth. He needed, one day, to return to Heaven. And the Church needed to be able to carry on his work on Earth after he returned to Heaven, so that his kingdom would come on Earth as it is in Heaven. So, he sent his disciples out to give them a first experience of doing Jesus' work themselves. No longer just watching him do the work, but taking part themselves.

But unlike learning to ride a bike, they couldn't by their own power or authority. He needed to pass on to them *his* authority over sickness and evil spirits. And once they'd received it, they also needed to *believe* they had that authority in order to do the work Jesus was asking them to do.

When I was in secondary school, I was picked to captain our school cricket team. My P.E. teacher said that I had the necessary cricket knowledge to perform that role, and so gave me that authority. But others in the team were jealous of my position, and I was scared of their reaction. Plus, I didn't actually know nearly as much about cricket as my teacher seemed to think. So, I really didn't do *any* captaining of the side. I didn't encourage my team before or during the game, I didn't move fielders around to better positions, or make decisions about who bowled when, or anything. Needless to say, we lost heavily! I was given the *authority*, but I didn't believe I *deserved* the authority, so I didn't use it.

But Jesus gave his disciples authority over sickness and evil spirits, and they *did* use it. And they discovered, when they tried, that they could do what he sent them to do. That's true for anything Jesus asks us to do; he will always give us the skills and authority to do it, whether that's healing sickness, or talking to friends about Jesus, or welcoming people to church, or leading part of a church service or small group. Sometimes what he asks us to do might seem scary at first. But if God wants us to do it, he will give us what we need to do it. And he'll also start us off small, so that when we succeed, we get more courage to do bigger things in the future. Because God only asks us to do things that he knows we *can* do with his help.

Song

2) Why did Jesus send them out in twos?

We're going to move on to look at some of Jesus' specific instructions now, starting with our second question, "Why did Jesus send them out in pairs?" But first we're going to play a game. On the screen soon will appear a photo of a number of items. You'll get 20 seconds to look at the photo, and then it's going to disappear. Then you'll have 30 seconds on your own to write down (or for very young ones to say to your mum or dad) all the things you can remember seeing.

[Play game]

[re-show photo for answers]

Now we're going to play that again, with a different set of objects, but this time you're allowed to work with someone else. If you're in the building and sitting on your own, each write down what you can remember, and pool your answers at the end.

[Play game]**[re-show photo for answers]**

Now, did you remember more working on your own or with a partner?

[Take answers]

Two brains are better than one, aren't they? We remember more together than as individuals. That, itself, would be a benefit of sending the disciples out in twos: they could better remember what Jesus had taught them if and when they were asked questions. But there are other benefits to working in pairs too. Can anyone think of any other benefits?

[Take answers]

If not given as answers, include the following:

- There was a degree of protection in walking along the roads together
- If one were injured, the other could help him
- We need company, and two can talk together
- One could encourage the other if he were feeling low
- While one spoke, the other could be praying
- There is also power in two agreeing in prayer. Jesus said, "Truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." (Matt 18:19)

So, there were very good reasons why Jesus sent them out in pairs. And it's just as important that we support one another in our Christian lives and witness. We can't be physically with another Christian all the time – you might be the only Christian in your class at school for instance – but we can remember to pray for one another. One great idea is to form a group with one or two other people and regularly share prayer requests with one another.

Prayer Testimony from Sarah Beswick***Prayer Labyrinth activity***

We're going to do our own prayer activity now, which is like a prayer journey. Hopefully, you have brought with you the labyrinth picture that was sent out. This is a tool to help us to pray. Start at the bottom with the yellow and slowly trace your finger along with me. But stop each time the colour changes. You can use this in lots of ways, by thinking of a different topic for prayer with each colour. This is just one way. Please trace along with me and pray with me.

As you trace along the **yellow** slowly, thank Jesus for showing us how we should live. Pick one or two things especially that Jesus showed us and thank him for those things. Pause when you reach the orange.

Now, as you trace along the **orange**, say sorry to Jesus for the ways you know you haven't lived like him, and thank him for his forgiveness through his cross. Pause when you reach the red.

Moving along the **red**, ask Jesus to give you courage to live for him even if everyone around you is living differently. Pause at the green.

Along the **green**, ask Jesus to help you to show his love to others in the way you treat them. Perhaps think if there is someone who is lonely who you could befriend. Or if people are mean, how you can act differently. Pause when you reach the purple.

With the **purple**, pray for a friend who doesn't know Jesus. Ask God to give you a chance to say something to your friend about him, and for the courage to speak when he gives you the chance. Pause at the end.

As you trace along the **blue**, pray for a friend from church, that God will help them be a good Christian witness too. If you know anything specific about any difficult situations they are facing, pray for those situations especially. Pause when you reach the light blue.

Lastly, as you trace along the **light blue**, thank Jesus that he believes in you and trusts you to be a part of building his kingdom.

Song

3) Why did Jesus send them out with no provisions?

[Bring on framed rucksack packed with items for an overnight hike]

As a teenager, I liked to go on overnight hikes with the Scouts or with my brothers. We would walk from a drop-off point one day, carrying all our equipment – including our tents and cooking gear, if we weren't staying in a Youth Hostel – stay overnight, and then walk on to a different pick up point the next day. In this way you could do a much longer walk and see much more of the countryside. But, if I'm honest, as a teenage boy, it was probably just as much about proving my strength! But sometimes we didn't prepare well enough. One night we forgot our tent poles and had to suspend the tent from a tree. Another night we forgot the sugar for the porridge in the morning, though my brother and I discovered that leftover curry powder from the night before works reasonably well as an alternative flavouring!

But, I wonder, what do you think I would pack in this bag for an overnight hike? Assume that I'd be staying in a youth hostel, so won't need a tent or cooking pots. And I can buy food from the youth hostel shop when I get there. You have one minute to write down as many guesses as you can.

[Time for writing]

[Reveal answers. A point for every correct guess]

All that stuff for just *one* night away! Yet, Jesus told *his* disciples to, "Take *nothing* for the journey except a staff," which would help them walk, and could be used for protection if needed. Can you imagine going on a week-long journey and not even taking any food with you, or any money to buy food? That leads us to our third question, "Why did Jesus send them out with no provisions?" Have a think or, if you're in a bubble with others, have a chat about why you think Jesus told them to take so little with them.

[Time for chatting]

[Take answers]

We don't entirely know the answer to this question, but some of the most likely explanations are:

1) They were to live very simply during this mission, to emphasise that the good news they brought was for *everyone*. That might also be why they were told to stay in one house, so they wouldn't be tempted to accept a later better offer from someone more wealthy.

2) They were to trust God to provide all they needed. That would have been a little easier for them because there was a cultural expectation on Jews to provide hospitality to anyone who came to their door seeking it. But even so, it was an important lesson to learn that God will always provide what we need – as Janet and Peter were sharing last week.

3) If people were willing to give them hospitality, that could demonstrate an openness to hear the good news about Jesus. The opposite was also true: an unwillingness to offer hospitality was a rejection of Jesus, and therefore they were to warn such villages of the coming judgement for rejecting him.

Now, Jesus did not say that this is how *all* Christian mission should be conducted – these instructions may well have been specific to this mission – but, nevertheless all three of those principles are actually very good for us to learn too. We should learn to be content with simple living and not become too attached to our possessions. We should learn to trust God to supply all our needs. And it is wise to concentrate more of our efforts to share the good news of Jesus on those who show an openness to hearing about him.

Two last things I want to say before we close. Firstly, this passage demonstrates that *any* of us can be used by God to share his good news, because the authority and power to do that comes from *him* not from *us*. I've been encouraged, for instance, by those who have invited a friend, neighbour, relative or work colleague along to the online Alpha Course, because it takes courage to make that move. And some have said, "Yes" to that invitation. That leads me to my last point: when these disciples stepped out in faith and obeyed what Jesus told them to do, they found that they could do it, but not until they started. I've experienced the same time and again in my life, too. And, by the way, God doesn't think anyone is too young or too old for him to use. He uses children and adults alike. All that matters is that we are *willing* to be used. So what can you do to share Jesus' good news this week?

[Pray]