

Advance the Kingdom

Mark 6:7-13

Introduction: 1) Those who follow Jesus have the honor and joy of advancing and extending His kingdom. We actually share in what He is doing! What a privilege we have. Now, there are some specific aspects to our calling:

- He calls us to go and we obey. Period. No questions asked.
- He sends us out with his authority in on the job training.
- We actually continue and extend the ministry of Jesus as we preach the gospel and minister to the hurting. (cf. Matt. 28:16-20).

2) In the text before us Jesus has just left His hometown of Nazareth where He was rejected for a second time (Luke 4:16-30; Mark 6:1-6). That experience will impact the counsel He gives His 12 disciples as they go on their evangelistic/mission assignment (6:4, 11).

3) Leaving Nazareth (6:6, a hinge vs.), Jesus moves on to other villages where He continues His teaching (*didasko*) ministry. He may be disappointed (as all of us will be from time to time) but He is not deterred from fulfilling the will of His Father.

4) After discipling and mentoring the 12 for an extended period, it is now time for them to get their feet wet, it is time for “on the job training.” Their apprenticeship now goes to the next level.

Transition: Though all aspects of their training and instruction do not apply, there are some significant principles that we would be wise to take notice of and to consider in our particular assignment as we join hands with Jesus in “advancing the kingdom.”

I. Go with Jesus' authority and as a team. 6:7

- Jesus calls His 12 disciples to Himself. He then begins to send them out (*apostello*; root of “apostle”) two by two (lit. “*duo duo*”). Here were the first “dynamic duos!” Jesus sends them out as a team for several reasons: 1) It is safer and wiser to travel and work as a team. Lone Rangers are easy targets of the evil one. As Ecclesiastes 4:9 says, “two are better than one.” 2) The law required 2 witnesses to verify a matter (Deut. 17:6; 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1). This was in keeping with a cultural norm for that day.
- He also gave them His authority (*exousia*), the right and power, over demons, unclean spirits. Jesus, at this point in His ministry intensifies the attention He gives His disciples and He delegates to them His authority.
 - The 12 were His authorized and appointed representatives.
 - The 12 were (as are we) extensions of King Jesus.
 - Indeed a man’s representatives were viewed as the man Himself. What an honor! What a responsibility!
- Paul complements this when He says in 2 Cor. 5:20, “we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us.” We represent the King!
- Called as fishers of men in 1:16-20 and those who are set apart to be with Jesus (3:13-19), they are now ready to go out on their own as extension of their Master.

II. Go mean and lean with nothing non-essential. 6:8-9

- To be effective in God’s work we must do what we do unencumbered, no excess baggage that could impede our mission. Further, we must go in radical faith and dependence on our God.

- The precise instructions Jesus provides for the 12 also provide for us principles in our work.
- Verse 8-9 says travel light. Take nothing that is not absolutely essential.
- In the parallel accounts in Matthew 10:9-10 and Luke 9:3 the apostles are told not to take staff or sandals (Matt), staff (Luke). The idea in those 2 accounts may be don't purchase additional items for the mission but just take what you already have.
Further, Mark may have in view the shepherd's staff for walking while Matthew and Luke may have in view the shepherd's club for protection (Lane, F.n 31, 207). The bottom line is the most basic and simple preparation is to be made.
- They do not travel 1st class! They do not make their ministry a means for accumulating wealth, stuff.
- They are not to become bloated but to stay mean and lean.
- Interestingly, the 4 items required of the 12 are identical to that which God told the Hebrews to take on their flight from Egypt in the Exodus (Ex. 12:11). Is a new exodus under a greater Moses (Deut 18:15-18) in view? Is the emphasis on faith in God to provide for what we need the point of the passage?! Edwards: "True service of Jesus is characterized by dependence on Jesus, and dependence on Jesus is signified by going where Jesus sends despite material shortfalls and unanswered questions...they must trust him alone who sends them" (181).

Application: Little provisions requires big faith in God to meet your needs! (cf. Phil 4:19)

III. Go where you are welcomed and move on when rejected. 6:10-11

- Having instructed them on what to take, Jesus now tells them where to stay and when to move on.

- First (v. 10), when you find a receptive home stay there until your work is done in that area. Do not impose yourself on multiple homes and do not seek out nicer accommodations once you are there. This is not a pleasure tour in search of a 5-star hotel. Adequacy is your goal not comfort or plush amenities. Accept what is offered and be grateful for that. Do not dishonor the kindness of a lesser home by moving to a nicer one and thereby become an offense to the gospel. **Motel 6** is just fine. **The Ritz-Carlton** is not necessary or even helpful! Don't be aloof. Live among them. Be dependent on them. Be accountable. Share life with them. Be open and transparent. Show integrity!
- Second (v. 11), if you do not receive a warm reception in a “short-term” mission (a crucial, contextual point) (they will not receive you or listen to you), move on and leave a visible sign of their personal responsibility and prospective judgment (shake off the dust).
 - They should anticipate rejection by some.
 - When turned away move on, at least for now.
 - When you leave, in “a merciful prophetic act” (Hughes, 136), shake off the dust from your feet to warn them of what they are rejecting. Shaking the dust off one's feet was something pious Jews did when they had travelled outside Israel. It was a way to signify their disassociation and rejection of the paganism of those places and the divine judgment that awaited them. The principle here is similar.
- There will be times, with a broken but honest heart, that we must warn others of the danger of rejecting Christ and the judgment they will experience. It hurts but it is necessary.

IV. Go preaching the Word and doing the work of the kingdom. 6:12-13

- The final 2 verses of this section summarize the specifics of the disciple's mission. Not surprising, it mirrors in precise detail what they had seen Jesus do.
 - 1) They went out and preached repentance, the same message preached both by John the Baptist (Mark 1:4) and Jesus (Mark 1:15).
 - 2) With His authority and enablement, they cast out many demons. Literally, "demons many they cast out."
 - 3) They anointed with oil (cf. James 5:14-16) many who were sick and healed them.
- They are to go as servants. They are not to compromise their message even if it brings rejection and persecution. They must have the courage to tell the truth about Jesus and the gospel.
- Realistic expectations (some will receive us and others will reject us) must be accepted.
- Close companions you can trust and work with will be essential to the success of the mission.
- Now, what about the reoccurring theme of "repentance?" If it was the first word out of the mouth of John, Jesus and the apostles (cf. Acts 2:38) it must be an important component of the gospel and the Christian life.
- Thomas Watson, an English Puritan (ca. 1620-1686) wrote a helpful treatise on repentance. He said, "Repentance is a grace of God's Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed." Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), p. 18. Watson then said there are six ingredients for true repentance. The first is **sight of sin**, whereby a

person comes to himself (Luke 15:17) and clearly views his lifestyle as sinful. If we fail to see our sin we are rarely motivated to repent.

The second ingredient for true repentance is **sorrow for sin** (Psalm 38:18). We need to feel the nails of the cross in our soul as we sin. Repentance includes godly grief; holy agony (2 Cor. 7:10). The fruits of repentance show genuine, anguishing sorrow over sin and not just the consequences of it. Sorrow for sin is seen in the ongoing actions it produces.

The third ingredient is **confession of sin**. The humble sinner voluntarily passes judgment on himself as he sincerely admits to the specific sins of his heart and life. At least seven benefits of confession are found in Scripture.

- 1) Confession of sin gives glory to God.
- 2) Confession of sin is a means to humble the soul.
- 3) Confession of sin gives release to a troubled heart.
- 4) Confession of sin purges out sin. Augustine called it “the expeller of vice.”

Confession of sin endears Christ to the soul that needs atoning.

- 5) Confession of sin makes way for forgiveness.
- 6) Confession of sin makes way for mercy.

Fourth, **shame for sin** is an ingredient for true repentance. The color of repentance is blushing red. Repentance causes a holy embarrassment. Ezra said, “O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift my face to you, my God, for our iniquities have risen higher than our heads, and our guilt has mounted up to the heavens” (Ezra 9:6). The repenting prodigal was so ashamed of his sin that he did not feel he

deserved to be a son anymore (Luke 15:21). Sin makes us shamefully naked. It exposes us.

The fifth ingredient in repentance is **hatred of sin**. We must hate our sin to the core. We hate sin more deeply when we love Jesus more fully. Repentance begins in the love of God and ends in the hatred of sin. Tolerating sin is a willful step toward committing it. True repentance loathes sin deeply.

Finally, the sixth progressive ingredient of repentance is **turning from sin** and returning to the Lord “with all your heart” (Joel 2:12). This turning from sin implies a notable change, “performing deeds in keeping with repentance” (Acts 26:20). “Thus says the Lord God: Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations” (Ezek. 14:6). We are called to turn away from all our abominations-not just the obvious ones.

Repentance most importantly is not just a turning away from sin, but also a turning in “repentance **toward God** and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). We should repent of our doubt by believing in the goodness, greatness and graciousness of God and to turn in faith for freedom in the Gospel. Here is the joy we have in repentance. “It is God’s kindness that leads us to repentance.” We rejoice that Christ has done so much for us and continues to do for us. Our prayer is, “Lord, I am an adopted child, not a slave to sin. I am accepted because of Christ. I have forgotten how loved, secure, rich and free I am in Christ. Please let me be astonished by your love. And in the process, help me to hate my sin.”¹

¹ Much of this bullet point, found on pages 5-7 is either directly quoting or paraphrasing Scott Thomas and Tom Wood, *Gospel Coach: Shepherding Leaders to Glorify God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 87-90. This information has been used by permission from the authors.

Conclusion:

- It is interesting to note that the mission of the 12 sandwiches or brackets an interesting and tragic event in biblical history: the murderous beheading of John the Baptist (6:7-13, 30-32). Why would Mark do this? What are we to learn? Could it be, at least in part, that the kingdom advances mysteriously in the midst of rejection, even the death of God's choice servants?
 - We go as a team and we may suffer and die as a team.
 - We go with very little and even what we have can be taken away.
 - Some will welcome us but others will not only reject us, they will try to destroy us.
 - Preaching the Word and helping others may not result in our praise but our death.
- This was the fate of John. This was the fate of Jesus. This was the fate of the 12 (minus John the apostle). This may be your fate. It may be my fate. But then did not Jesus say in John 15:18, "If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you" and in Matt 10:24, "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master."
- As we advance the kingdom of King Jesus, if indeed we are rejected and even persecuted as we go, preach and minister, may our Lord give us the heart of the apostles, of whom it was said by Dr. Luke in Acts 5:41, "They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name." Carry His Name and you may suffer shame and even pain. Oh, but do not forget the great gain now and forever!