

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost - Year B

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Ezekiel 2:1-5

Psalm 123

II Corinthians 12:2-10

Mark 6:1-13

07/07/2024

### **Gospel**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark:

1 [Jesus] came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4 Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." 5 And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. 6 And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching. 7 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; 9 but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. 10 He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 11 If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the

dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” 12 So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. 13 They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

The Gospel of our Lord

### **Prayer**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

### **The Tools of the Trade**

Good morning! Megan and I will be leaving for the beach in a few weeks and as is normally the case for the two of us, we’ve designated an end of the kitchen table as a “to be packed/taken” area. We have always been the type of people to pack a lot. When I was younger I just wasn’t good at estimating what I would need, and while I’m better now, it turns out when you get older you take along more creature comforts. So I’m sure that in a few weeks the two of us will be stuffing my Mazda 3 to the gills with everything under the sun. All of this is for a relaxing vacation, when I go on ministry related trips I usually end up bringing even more! So it’s hard for me to imagine the rather short list of things that Jesus allows the disciples to take with them at the end of today’s Gospel reading.

But that’s the command in our text. And as a whole, our lesson is a strange one. In my notes as I was preparing I asked the question: what is this story about? Is it about Jesus’ inability to do miracles in his hometown? Is it about his family's disbelief? Is it about the disciples being sent out on their own? Or all of the above and more?

The text can be roughly broken up into two sections. As has been the trend for the past several weeks, we pick up the story where we left off last Sunday. Chapter 5 finished with the healing of the two women, and today

we see Jesus head back home for a family visit. (True story: When I first preached at my home congregation for my pastor when he was on vacation while I was at seminary he left me a note in the worship binder that said “good luck, I hope you get a warmer reception than Jesus did when he came home to preach.”) In this first section Jesus immediately leaves the home of the little girl and heads home. Remember, the Gospel of Mark moves fast, so we jump right to the next important piece. Jesus teaches in the Synagogue, which as I mentioned last week was a sort of communal center for the Jewish people. They worshiped there, they gathered for news and celebrations, and it served as a hub for all major activity.

The response of the crowd needs some unpacking. The text reads: “... *many who heard him were astounded. They said, ‘Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?’ And they took offense at him.*” One interesting detail is that the text makes no mention of Joseph. In a culture that was very much a patriarchal system, the Gospel specifically names Jesus as the son of Mary. We also learn that Jesus had siblings. He is the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon, as well as several unnamed sisters. We also learn that Jesus is not a classically trained Rabbi. He has not undergone the traditional training but was instead a carpenter.

So imagine you live in a small town, the guy that helped with your home addition packs up and leaves town. He shows up a few months later with a large crowd and a group of disciples, and he’s performing miracles... all without any formal training. So, when the crowd asks “Where did this man get all this?,” They’re referring to his education.

My opinion on Jesus' inability to heal is that it has less to do with God's power, and more to do with the small role we play and our own free will. If we staunchly refuse to accept help from someone, it doesn't mean that healing was impossible, but simply that we were in a position where we refused to let that healing take place.

And before you start thinking negatively of Jesus' hometown, listen to what one scholar wrote: "*One of the more unnerving aspects of Mark's narrative is that people we might expect to grasp Jesus' significance end up failing to do so. Presumed insiders expect the wrong things from Jesus and turn out to be outsiders.*"<sup>1</sup> It's a lesson directed at all of us here. It's a lesson for the person who has spent their whole life in the church and thinks they know exactly how God works. It's a lesson for pastors who think they can't be surprised anymore!

In response Jesus sends his disciple out. The second section of today's text begins halfway through verse 6. Remember, they had no television or internet, so traveling teachers and healers were in some ways a form of entertainment. It was common for these travelers to show up at a location and move from house to house. These homes were expected to feed and lodge the traveler, and by moving around it distributed the burden a little more evenly. But Jesus doesn't allow this. He forces his disciples to stay in one place. This meant that connections were formed. Community grew. If a traveler was a phony person, or someone untrustworthy, moving around gave them some protection. Jesus won't allow this.

We also learn that the twelve disciples don't seem to be allowed to take very much with them. Another scholar writes that "*the equipment for*

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-14-2/commentary-on-mark-61-13-6>

*such ministry appears astonishingly meager.*<sup>2</sup> I look at this two ways. The first is from a perspective of fear. It's a mentality that has plagued the church from the very beginning and continues to this very day. The disciples are given so little and must try to accomplish so much. There is never enough. We always need more people, more energy, more money, more and more. Twelve disciples isn't enough. The sandals are too old and they need another tunic. We need more readers, more givers, more ushers and more people. We are too few to accomplish anything meaningful. How can St. Paul's do anything of meaning like this?

But I look at it differently. What might seem like a limitation to the disciples ends up showing the world that God accomplishes so much with so very little. We look around and see the church and the world changing and we understandably react with fear. But so what? Things always change, nothing ever stays the same. God has been working since the beginning of time and the Holy Spirit has been working in the church for over two thousand years to help us weather whatever storm may come our way. Even amidst the fear and uncertainty, the text today ends like this: "*So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.*" For only twelve men, that sure seems like a whole lot of amazing things that they accomplished. Just imagine what God can do with us! Amen.

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<sup>2</sup><https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-14-2/commentary-on-mark-61-13-4>