

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

***The Sixth Sunday after Trinity***

**Gospel Reading**

**Mark 6.1-13**

**The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth**

**6** He left that place and came to his home town, 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 offence at him. **4** Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, 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.

**The Mission of the Twelve**

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.

**Other Readings: 2 Samuel 5.1-5,9-10      Psalm 48      2 Corinthians 12.2-10**

**Homily**

Returning home, is usually a lovely thing to do. You are in familiar surroundings, surrounded by people you have grown up with who know you and love you. It brings a glow to the heart.

But in this passage, I must honestly say I feel sorry for Jesus. At first everyone is welcoming him home as you would expect. Because remember, he had done marvellous things that they had heard about. He had stilled the storm, raised Jairus' daughter to life and healed the women with the flow of blood. But very soon the people around him started to look at him differently. This is not the person we know; they could not get it clear in their heads, what it was that had happened to this man. He was one of us, but now! Who does he think he is?

They all took offence at what he was saying and turned against him, exactly the same as the Pharisees had done to the Herodians earlier in Mark's Gospel. The Greek phrase 'Take offence' is used in Mark's Gospel for those who began to follow Jesus but then fell away. It's a bit like the seeds that fall on the rocky, stoney ground or among thorns.

Jesus then finds himself unable to do many deeds of power in Nazareth. Others lack faith and make him feel self-conscious and unable to act in a relaxed and natural way. You see they could not come to terms and embrace the change in Jesus, they were short-sighted and could not see the works of God through Jesus.

But then in the second part of this reading, Jesus having moved on, sends out the Twelve to begin the work of Mission. Working collaboratively with each other he sends them out into the world, instructing them to take the bare minimum. We all know that if we carry too heavy a load, it gets in the way and becomes heavier by the minute. Jesus gives them very clear instructions about welcoming. 'If we are asked to stay, we stay. If it is made clear you're not wanted, well there is no point in hanging around'. He tells them to 'shake the dust off their feet and move on'. And lo and behold the mission was a success. They proclaimed the Good News of the Kingdom, they cast out Demons. They moved the Gospel forward reaching people and doing their work with love, compassion and purpose.

God calls all of us to step out, to move away, sometimes it's not such a bad thing. The rejection that Jesus encountered at Nazareth leads to the empowering of the disciples and the Mission of the Gentiles. Both Jesus and the Disciples stepped out from what they knew to fresh ground where Jesus' mission expanded and grew, which was probably not expected by anyone. And, after empowering the Disciples with his authority he sends them out in pairs, as his light and salt into all place of shadows and darkness.

What a privilege this is now to us, to be Disciples and to do this self-same thing - going out into this world in the name of Jesus with his authority, to cover new ground. Although we go out in different directions and work collaboratively with each other we have the Christian community for our support.

Jesus tells them also to go with very little and with empty hands. We have to learn to trust and let go, but most importantly to go with God's speed and the prospects of an exciting journey. In essence we need to be open to where the Spirit sends us, ready for the gifts we will receive on that journey.

Now, the Christian journey can be a long road with a heavy weight to carry. We are all members of one body with the common goal in our sight. But, if we work together, even in pairs, we can bring God's Kingdom to this earth and bring light, hope, and love, ministering as the Twelve did to those we meet and to each other. As disciples of Christ, we are called to imitate that surrender to God's unknown plan, and that exciting journey we have been given. How blessed are we. Amen.

## Conversation Questions

1. Reflect on your own journey. How many people have walked alongside you in your journey?
2. Put yourself in the narrative, how do you think you would have reacted if you'd seen and heard the people of Nazareth treating Jesus like they did?
3. Is there anything else from the passage not already discussed that speaks to you? What is it?
4. What will you do this week in your Monday-to-Saturday ministry in response to what you have heard today? #everydayfaith

## Prayer

Spend some time in prayer, responding to what you have heard today and listening to what God might be saying to you.

## Collect of the day

Merciful God,  
you have prepared for those who love you  
such good things as pass our understanding:  
pour into our hearts such love toward you  
that we, loving you in all things and above all things,  
may obtain your promises,  
which exceed all that we can desire;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

(or)

Creator God,  
you made us all in your image:  
may we discern you in all that we see,  
and serve you in all that we do;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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