

July 11, 2021
15th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Mark 6:7-13

Jesus summoned the Twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing for the journey but a walking stick - no food, no sack, no money in their belts. They were, however, to wear sandals, but not a second tunic. He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave. Whatever place does not welcome you or listen to you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet in testimony against them." So they went off and preached repentance. The Twelve drove out many demons, and they anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Background:

In last Sunday's gospel (Mark 6:1-6) Jesus had returned to his native place accompanied by his disciples. The people were astonished at Jesus' teaching, but they found it difficult to accept him because they knew him and his family. That text concluded with Mark stating that it was difficult for Jesus to perform any mighty deeds there.

Today's gospel follows almost immediately after that text. The last half of verse 6 has been omitted, which states that Jesus left his hometown and began to preach in neighboring villages. The omitted section gives the context for Jesus gathering together the disciples and sending them out with his authority and message.

Jesus' instruction as recorded by Mark gives the apostles permission to wear sandals and take a walking stick, but in the other two synoptic gospels, even these were forbidden. The apostles are also instructed not to take any money, not even the small amount that could have been carried in a belt. They must rely on one of the most honored virtues of people of the day, hospitality, and God.

Travel during Jesus' time was considered unnecessary and therefore a suspicious activity. Family and neighbors provided everything that a person needed. A person often died within the same household where they were born. In such a culture, strangers were naturally looked upon with suspicion. But they also brought news of the outside world and the possibility of an allegiance that could be beneficial. Therefore, hospitality to strangers was highly valued. Guests were offered food, board, and safety from others who would at the same time be suspicious of their intentions.

Jesus sends the Twelve out two by two. Traveling in pairs would provide a degree of safety, companionship, and a measure of credibility. Two is the number of witnesses necessary to establish the truth of one's claim. Jesus sends them out also with authority over unclean spirits. The last verse of the text states that they preached, performed exorcisms, and healed through anointing. This is the same ministry that Jesus himself had taken on as described in the first chapters of Mark's gospel, and it is what he tried to bring to his native place in the text that precedes this one. However, it is clear that the disciples do not do this on their own. Jesus has entrusted them with his power. They act as his ambassadors.

Reflection Questions:

1. How has Covid 19 and regular updates from the world and local health authorities affected your attitude toward travel?
2. Are you a person who tends to travel light or do you strive to be prepared? How do your packing habits affect your interactions with people when you arrive?
3. Do you recall occasions when offering hospitality was an important family value?
4. Why do you think Jesus sent his disciples out to preach on their own just after he had received such a poor reception in his own hometown?
5. If you were among those early disciples walking down the road with your companion, what might be some of the things passing through your mind?
6. Can you take some time to talk to God about how you feel about his instruction to the disciples, or about your sense of also being sent by God, or spend some time thanking God for the success of the disciples throughout history that brought you into your relationship with God?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscs-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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From Joe:

Friends,

Here are the gospel background and reflection questions for July 11th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the gospel from Mark, Jesus sends the twelve out two by two to preach repentance and cure the sick, giving them authority over unclean spirits. He tells them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave. Whatever place does not welcome you, leave there and shake the dust off your feet." The other readings also refer to the sending out of a prophet, justice preparing the way before the Lord, and God destining his people for adoption to himself. In the first reading, Amos says, "I was no prophet. I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. The Lord took me from them and said, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'" Psalm 85 declares, "I will hear what God proclaims. Truth shall spring out, and justice shall prepare the way of his steps." In the second reading from the letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes, "In love the Father chose us, and destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ."

Joe

> i < May the Word light your way each day!

Excerpts from the readings for July 11, 2021, the Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Amaziah, priest of Bethel, said to Amos, "Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of Judah! There earn your bread by prophesying, but never again prophesy in Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary and a royal temple." Amos answered Amaziah, "I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to a company of prophets; I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. The Lord took me from following the flock, and said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.
I will hear what God proclaims; the Lord—for he proclaims peace.
Near indeed is his salvation to those who fear him, glory dwelling in our land.
Kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss.
Truth shall spring out of the earth, and justice shall look down from heaven.
The Lord himself will give his benefits; our land shall yield its increase.
Justice shall walk before him, and prepare the way of his steps.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth. In him we were chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

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Excerpts from Amos 7:12-15; Psalm 85:9-14; Ephesians 1:3-14; and Mark 6:7-13