

GO!

Mark 6:1-13 (in particular 7-13)

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May the words of my mouth and the ears of our hearts be open to the word of God this day. AMEN.

Well it is 4th of July weekend. A time to remember the freedoms won for us by men and women who risked much to say that we have a declaration of independence. That we have rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That we have freedoms to just laws and taxation. That we are freedom to choose our leaders with representation, and not have one ruler over, but instead a government of the people by the people. Of course in modern days we have warped and changed those initial ideas put forth by the founding fathers, but this weekend we remember and give thanks for those initial steps taken. Can you imagine living in those times, ready to go to war, to lose your homes, your family, your life for what you believed in. That took devotion and commitment that I wonder if we still have today.

How many of you like comic strips? In just a few words they wonderfully highlight deeper truths of the human condition all with just a bit of humor. The comic strips Peanuts written by the late Charles Schulz is a wonderful example of this. In this comic strip, Rerun, a junior member of the peanut gang, is standing on the sidewalk looking across the street as Charlie Brown walks up. Charlie Brown asks him what he is doing there. And Rerun says that he is with Linus, who happens to be across the street knocking on doors telling people about the great pumpkin. Then Rerun explains that he is standing way over here across the street so that no one will know that they are together. And in the last frame, Charlie Brown asks Rerun what kind of Evangelist he is standing way over here while Linus knocks on doors. Rerun answers that he is a Semi-evangelist... That is cute, we laugh at it but at the same time it is very telling of our culture, how many of us can't say that we are in a way just like little rerun, we are semi-evangelists. We are all for the one who goes out telling and knocking on doors, but please don't think that we are one of them. We would rather be across the street, safely at a distance supporting the mission, as long as someone else is doing it. When it comes to going out to share faith, most of us can readily find something else we should be doing. Almost anything seems more important to going and evangelizing, telling people, friends and strangers about your faith in Christ as your savior, who grants hope eternal.

But isn't that what Christ actually expected of us. Christ not only called people to come and follow him, he also sent them out to go. He said "Go therefore and make disciples of all

nations... teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you". The implication is clear: Don't wait for the world to come to you. It won't. We can put up the building and hang out the sign but the world does not come flooding in. Well maybe if we had fireworks here or a yard sale or free dinner but normally the world is not flooding into Churches seeking the Truth. Jesus said that his followers were to bear witness to him in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. He sends them out to tell of the Kingdom of God.

In today's Gospel reading Jesus sent his disciples out, two by two, on a temporary mission. Those first disciples, called to a mission, were to be followed by a bold line of witnesses, marching through the years like a mighty army, century after century. It is made up of men, women and children who have responded to Christ's call and who have been willing to step out for Jesus Christ. That procession includes people of all ages and all generations; saints and martyrs; some hobbling with difficulty, some with sore feet or bloody feet. It is an inspiration to see this great throng of believers who risked everything to share the good news, risked home, family and even their lives to share the news of Jesus Christ. It is not easy, but Jesus never said it would be easy to be one of his followers.

As he sent those first disciples out, Jesus advised them of the task before them, the risk involved, and the challenge of his call. Getting ready for this task was not like the normal preparation for a trip. Jesus ordered them to take nothing for this journey except a staff. None of the usual things that one might take on a journey were allowed. Jesus said, "No bread, no bag and no money." Only a walking staff, what your wearing and your sandals.

If Jesus was saying that today it would be more like no suitcase needed for this trip. No cooler or don't even packing a sandwich. Just take your walking stick, and what your wearing right now, put on your tennis shoes and go. Oh by the way don't take your wallet, your visa or mastercard or American express. And leave the atm card and check book behind also. This is one time you will not need any of these things.

In other words, "don't get bogged down with paraphernalia. The more you carry with you, the less free you are. The more things you own, the more they own you. There more you have the more you have to manage, take care of and get distracted by. To do the mission doesn't need any of that, just keep it simple." Christ today could be saying, "Go." You don't need much, and everything won't be perfect, and you won't have all of the answers but the important thing is that you go and tell, go and witness, go and fulfill the mission."

And the mission Christ explains here is to go out teaching and he even gives them "authority over the unclean spirits..." We hear that Jesus went from town to town, about all the

villages teaching, and so now the disciples are to do what Jesus has been doing, teaching of the love of God, the kingdom that is eternal, the promise of forgiveness and acceptance into that heavenly home. And so they went out calling people to repentance, to turn from evil, to receive the love of God, they cast out demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

They went with just what they had and risked it all fulfilling that mission Jesus called them too. They preached and taught, but they never went to seminary or to college for an education degree. They went out healing the sick and curing many, but they were not doctors, they never went to John Hopkins or Harvard for a medical degree. They were not licensed psychiatrists or counselors that listen and give people hope. They were not even ghostbusters or ghost hunters that were trained to drive out evil spirits, and yet they cast out many demons. They were not trained, educated, professionals, with lots of expertise or evidence to support them, and yet they went!

Jesus even warned them that their mission wouldn't be 100 percent successful. Not everyone would be anxious to hear the Good News. Some, confronted by the word of God, may be antagonistic. Others may simply ignore the word and refuse to listen to it.

We can see this in the words of the Gospel: "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 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." The disciples may have times when there appears to be no response to the word. If the people of one household do not respond to God's word, then they are to go on to the next. Not everyone is ready to hear.

Are we ready to hear. Are we listening to what Christ is calling us to do as his people? The word is read here, the prayers are lifted up, the good news is proclaimed, and yet are we all receiving those words. It's scary to think that perhaps we, St. Mark, may be the place where the witness has come and now is shaking off the dust and has moved on. Do we hear the calling to become Christ's disciples and answer that mission?

It is comforting to hear the invitation of the one we call Jesus the Good Shepherd, who says, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Those words are easy to hear and live, it feels cozy and comfortable. But the Word doesn't stop there. Christ gives his disciples of every generation the command to go, share the good news, to proclaim freedom from evil, tend to the sick, lift up the hurt and share the message of the forgiveness, the love, the eternal hope of the Lord.

Christ has given his disciples a mission. He did not ask those first disciples if they wanted

to go; he expected them to go. No one else has been given the responsibility to spread the word of God. That charge is reserved for the faithful. You and I as contemporary disciples, are challenged to accept the task of sharing the word of God and the risks it entails. We don't have to worry about the results. The Holy Spirit will take care of results. We are to trust the one who send us out. Do we accept the task? Do we take the risk? Can we meet the challenge? We are to go and trust in God. As you go out this week back into your work places, your homes, your families and friends, remember the mission you have as Christians, as God's chosen people today, live in the love of God, share the Good news, help those in need and in all ways answer the call of Christ to fulfill his mission? Amen.

May the peace and Grace of God be with you this day and throughout the week to come.
AMEN.

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Lord of Lord, and King of Kings, we praise you in your glory. Send now your victorious kingdom into our presence so that we may know of your promise of everlasting peace. As you sent your only begotten Son, so that all may have life, empower us to be your people that all may know of your Love. The Love that you brought into this world through the act of your own Son.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

God of mercy and forgiveness, empower your church to care for those in need and to serve each other in humility and love. We are indeed here lord at your Calling, empower us to do your will as you would have us do. We present ourselves before you receiving your Spirit into our Lives, Into our Minds and into our hearts. Move us to hear you calling to us, to receive the tasks you have given us and the ability to take the risk to fulfill the challenge of being your disciples.

Lord in your Mercy, hear our prayer.

God our Lord, Grant us your compassionate Spirit to all who are discouraged, depressed, anxious, or fearful and strengthen us to serve our sisters and brothers in joy and peace. Reconcile us to you as your children who struggle with faith, love, relationships, and ministry. Look with mercy on your servants who are hurt by anguish, afflicted by infirmity, or burdened with sickness, especially we pray for our sick, our shut-ins, And especially, Dave Reigel, the Family of Margaret Kaltrieder, Joseph Edwards, the Family of Charles Hershey and Dorothy Meinl and all those we name in our prayers to you.....

Lord In your Mercy, hear our prayer

Lord, In baptism, you have anointed us as a kingdom of servants who gather to serve you. Let our words be shaped by your mercy and our actions formed by your constant love. Nurture your Church by your Word and sacraments, that it may be the model of your will. Give empowerment to the people gathered here so that they may do your work. Be with us now and inspire us to reach out to those who still need to hear your Call in their lives.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Into your hands, O lord we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.