**Sunday, 7/4/21, Sermon**

**For Gospel Reading**

**Mark 6:1-13**

A visit to the Arlington National Cemetery is an amazing experience.

And time at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is worth the effort.

It is an honor for a soldier to be chosen to serve as a Tomb Guard

          who marches back and forth in front of the Tomb.

In the summer, the Guard is changed every thirty minutes,

          and in the winter, the guards change every hour.

Even at night, when the cemetery is closed,

          the guards carry out their duty and change every two hours.

They do this 24 hours a day, 365 days a year in every kind of weather.

When the Tomb Guard is being relieved of duty

          he always says to the Guard taking his place,

         “Post and orders remain as directed.”

The new guard says, "Orders acknowledged."

Thousands of years ago, God gave us our marching orders,

          and they have not changed over time.

For generations God's people have carried out His orders,

          and they have passed this command on to us.

It is as if they said, "Post and orders remain as directed."

When we listen and obey God, we are acknowledging His orders.

We are told to love the Lord our God with all our heart, mind, and soul.

And we are to love our neighbors as ourselves.

God's commands have not changed over the centuries.

When orders are given, they ought to be obeyed.

However, many people just don't get the idea.

We don't always want to obey, at least right now.

We have other things to do and other plans.

A newly married flight engineer with the Air Force

          had planned a weekend getaway with his new bride.

But on Thursday, his superior officer called,

          and told him he was to leave the next afternoon for an eight-day mission.

His wife was obviously disappointed.

"Don't you get weekends off like normal people?" she asked.

He gently explained that as a member of the US Air force,

          he was on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

She looked longingly into his eyes and said

“But, honey, couldn't you just explain to them that we had plans?”

God doesn't take vacations from loving and caring for us.

As Christians we don't get weekends off, or vacations from God.

We try to follow His ways all the time.

Sometimes we want to believe something so much

          that even when we know the truth, we cling to the error.

For centuries people believed that Aristotle was right

          when he said that the heavier an object, the faster it would fall to earth. Aristotle was regarded as the greatest thinker of all time,

          and surely he would not be wrong.

Anyone, of course, could have taken two objects,

          one heavy and one light,

          and dropped them from a great height to see

          whether or not the heavier object landed first.

But no one did until nearly 2,000 years after Aristotle's death.

In 1589 Galileo summoned learned professors

          to the base of the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

Then he went to the top and pushed off a ten-pound and a one-pound weight.

Both landed at the same instant.

The power of belief was so strong, however,

          that the professors denied their eyesight.

They continued to say Aristotle was right.

Sometimes we are so blinded to the truth that,

          even when presented with the evidence,

          we refuse to believe otherwise.

That was the problem people faced when Jesus came to his hometown

          with his disciples.

Jesus came and preached to His hometown of Nazareth,

They heard His words and saw His miracles.

Yet, since they knew that carpenters don't speak like this,

          or do miracles, he could not be the Son of God he claimed to be.

Their preconceived notions about Him were enough to blind them to the truth.

Because they did not believe Jesus could do such wonders, they brushed him off.

Since they did not believe what Jesus was teaching, they missed receiving

          the miracles of healing and forgiveness.

If people do not come seeking healing, they cannot be healed.

Jesus was amazed at their unbelief.

He was disappointed they would not believe what he was trying to teach them.

They clung to the falsehoods they believed,

          instead of discovering the miraculous truth.

They could have listened and watched,

          and discovered the wonderful truth about the Son of God.

The power of their belief was so strong,

          Jesus could do few deeds of power in their midst.

All of these people had every reason to trust Him,

          yet they failed to do so.

Jesus gathered His disciples and sent them out two by two,

          among the villages.

They believed and trusted Him.

They had seen what He could do.

They went out and did what Jesus told them to do.

And this small group of ordinary men

          were able to go out and cast out demons,

          and anointed many of the sick and healed them.

Jesus sent them out two by two, because often two are better than one.

If either of them gets discouraged, the other can help and encourage the first.

If one stumbled, or fell, the other could help the first get up.

Jesus still sends us out in this time.

We are to share the good news with everyone around us.

Our orders have not changed through all the centuries:

          We are to help others discover the love of God.

          God wants us to proclaim the Gospel message,

                    to heal the sick, and cast out demons.

We are to put what we have been taught into action

          so others can come to know Jesus,

          and experience His love and peace, and joy.

AMEN