

“The Way”

a Sermon by the Reverend Marsha E. Brown, Pastor of

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Mark 6: 1-13

Focus: Jesus taught a specific way of living by being open to God for what we need and for people to give as we give. In short; living with a philosophy/theology of abundance-not scarcity.

Function: Implore us to live with abandon- giving what we have and being alert for others to give to us and those we know who need help.

In our reading today, we have two stories: one about Jesus preaching in his hometown; and one about Jesus teaching the disciples how to live-not just share the gospel-but live.

The first one is probably a familiar phrase about the impossibility of anyone being a prophet in their hometown. And a few derogatory comments about Jesus from those who knew his beginnings- like being called “Son of Mary”- which was an allusion to possible gossip about his lack of a father.

The second story tells us how to live by traveling light and being open to people who receive us and the gospel into their lives. Listen now to the words of Mark 6:1-13, the first gospel written as God’s word to you.

“Jesus left that place and came to his hometown. His disciples followed him. On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue. Many who heard him were surprised.

“Where did this man get all this? What’s the wisdom he’s been given? What about the powerful acts accomplished through him? Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t he Mary’s son

and the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" they were repulsed by him and fell into sin.

Jesus said to them, "Prophets are honored everywhere except in their own hometowns, among their relatives and in their own households." He was unable to do any miracles there except that he placed his hands on a few sick people and healed them. He was appalled by their disbelief.

Then Jesus traveled through the surrounding villages teaching.

He called for the Twelve and sent them out in pairs. He gave them authority over unclean spirits.

He instructed them to take nothing for the journey except a walking stick—no bread, no bags, and no money in their belts. He told them to wear sandals but not to put on two shirts. He said,

"Whatever house you enter, remain there until you leave that place. If a place doesn't welcome you or listen to you, as you leave, shake the dust off your feet as a witness against them."

So they went out and proclaimed that people should change their hearts and lives. They cast out many demons, and they anointed many sick people with olive oil and healed them." This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Ron and I had a great time in Mexico with family the last two weeks. I tried to do a better job of traveling lightly this trip, but still almost had to pay more for my bag and pledged to get a luggage scale for our next trip! I didn't even buy that much, I guess everything and everybody brings back extra weight from vacation!

Jesus didn't need a luggage scale in his advice to the disciples about how to live. It is pretty simple- take no bag, no money, one shirt, no food. Just take your walking stick and go. And look for people to take you in and provide for you and you provide for them the message of God's love and healing grace that they need. I used to read this passage as only what the disciples were supposed to do in sharing the gospel. I thought that this information was for just that occasion of sharing the gospel and didn't apply to those who were not especially called to that kind of work. But you know what? This is not something separate from how we ALL are supposed to live! The gospel is something we live-not necessarily something we say. One commentator on this passage said, "You don't need extra equipment for this- you are the equipment. We are the means of grace. We are the voice of his message. We are the healing of his hands. We are his ambassadors. ...what will this life be like? They preached with joyful urgency that life can be radically different; right and left they send the demons packing, they brought wellness to the sick, anointing their bodies, healing their spirits."¹

They simply went about their lives like this and sharing the gospel flowed from them- it was the actions they took, the things they said, the forgiveness they gave, the life of abundance that they lived.

Most of us live a life of scarcity. We think we will not have enough so we need to parcel out what we have. Store it away. Only give a small amount to others, you don't know what tomorrow may bring!

Living an abundant life means that we EXPECT to have plenty and so we are generous with what we have. And so if we don't have the over abundance that most of us have because we shared it with someone- do you think it will really hurt us? Probably not.

¹¹ Aweirdthing.wordpress.com July 2, 2012

I saw a video from the library of the church I served in Austin yesterday. A person asked folks in a fast food section of a mall for food and every one of them refused to share with him. The a few others went to two different homeless people and gave them food. After a bit, the same person from the mall came over and asked them for food. Both of the homeless people shared what they had- the first a hamburger and the second a \$10 bill. The people who had the LEAST were the ones who shared!

When we live thinking we have enough, it is easy to share. When we live thinking we don't have enough we will never share.

Why is sharing important? Because God works in our lives when we are open to others. Sharing what we have opens us to others and deepens our faith.

When we travel lightly, we live in an economy of sharing that builds community, love and grace.

Friday afternoon, a distraught woman came to my office telling me about the flooding of her basement on Wednesday and that their 10 member household was in crisis. All the food they had was ruined. Their washer and dryer, water heater, freezer and furnace were ruined. Her 20 year old disabled son was sitting in the living room with a blanket because they could not wash his clothes. The baby needed diapers and wipes. We gave them food and diapers from the pantry, and I called the mayor to get the city to help clean out the sewer that was blocked from runoff from the street construction-at least part of it- but they need help. So today I am asking help for her and the 5 adults and 4 children who live less than a block from us. Help with cleaning out the sewer and getting useable appliances so they can continue to live there. They turned off the gas because of fear of leaks, and their stove is gas so they can't cook right now. If anyone here can help in any way, please see me after church.

Living the life that Jesus taught may not come easy to us, but if we have faith that God provides, and courage to live as we are called, we can change to do that. But it will require a change of how we live.

-We will need to turn our attention from guarding our belongings to reaching out with a gentle kindness toward others.

-As we move from relying on our own careful planning for every eventuality, we will be more open to what God may have waiting for us.

-If we don't have everything we need, we will be more open to receive the gifts of those along the way.²

Jesus taught us to live in this counter-intuitive way for a reason. It makes us need each other and so become a giving community. In our world of competition and self-promotion and individualization, we have lost the art of simply giving what we have and receiving what is given in gratitude. God does provide. And when we live expecting God to provide out of the amazing abundance that God does, it encourages others to trust in God. And THAT is the gospel. Even in failure, Jesus tells us to just shake the sand off your shoes and keep going. Failure and rejection will happen. So we don't have to fear it or try to prevent it. Just keep moving and living and giving and receiving.

May those who have ears hear this lesson and be changed, transformed in the way Jesus envisioned as the gospel of grace grows. Amen.

²² Dancing with theWord.com :Traveling Light 2012

