

July 8, 2018

Grace and Glory; Pastor Ken Albright

Theme: Only the essentials

Text: Mark 6:1-13

Ok. So I'm packing the van for a week at the Outer Banks. I've got the grocery list. The big Yeti cooler. The little Eddie Bauer Backpack cooler. I've got the sunscreen, the beach umbrella, and the Tommy Bahamas beach chairs. Oh...what am I forgetting? Oh yes-- the beach paddle ball set, the frisbee, and the corn hole boards. What am I forgetting folks? (Entertain suggestions)

We certainly don't want to be without the essentials when we are prepping for our beach trip, or any other excursion for that matter.

Today as we catch up with Jesus in Mark chapter 6, Mark is preparing to send his disciples out to do the very work he has been doing: anointing people with healing oil; calling for people to have a change of heart.

He sends them—not back to his hometown, Nazareth. He has already seen they are not open, their hearts not receptive to the reality that God could work wonders through the hands of a trained carpenter, whom they knew all too well—but apparently not well enough.

His packing list for his journeyman is notably brief. No groceries. No suitcase. No cash. Not even Apple Pay! Not even a change of clothing. And not those comfortable shoes for nice occasions. Only the sandals, made for commoners trekking many miles in dry, dusty conditions.

Jesus was establishing what was essential to the success of his mission in the world. And it had nothing to do with trappings and trimmings.

The success of his mission was insanely simple – ***all he needed to accomplish it was them.*** Their commitment to follow. Their openness to the hospitality of strangers. Their reliance on God, not themselves for their daily bread.

What he needed was those 12 and them only to expel any evil they would encounter, to lift people out of their misery and disease, to exhume people from their grave addictions and turn their grateful hearts Godward.

But wait – I thought the heart of Protestant theology was that God doesn't need us to do anything? That salvation and God's kingdom comes without our having to do anything to make it so. Well, today Mark throws a little different light on the subject of Jesus activity and our place in it.

Notice how it says Jesus couldn't do anything in Nazareth. His hands were tied. Why, do you think?  
Because familiarity breeds contempt.

His close- knit community who knew his family so well (notice they conveniently didn't name Jesus' sisters) could not accept the elevated authority of the one they knew when he was knee high to a string bean.

In that culture no one ascended in stature without someone else descending in stature. So, it says because of the hard- heartedness of the Nazareth natives he was only able to heal a few folks.  
Only a few?! ***Even a bad day for Jesus is still a good day!***

But think of what more could have happened in Nazareth if more hearts were open to hearing his message. To following with their feet. To ushering people into the synagogue. To placing their sick uncle in his path. I think this story beckons us back to the parable of the sower in Mark chapter 4.

There Jesus address the realities of the way things operate in God's eyes.

That some seed, the word, falls on good soil – and even then, some yields 30, 60, and even 100 fold.

**How might we look soberly at ourselves and reflect on what stands in the way of our yielding more for the sake of Jesus purposes in the world.**

What **baggage** are we willing to turn loose of so that God can get a bigger grip?

What **riches** are we clinging to in Lieu of the one who owns it all and supplies enough for us all to live adequately?

What **vices** do we cling too, compromising the dearest of relationships to feed them, that if we simply let go and lead a hold of the robe of the rabbi, he might do so much more, have so much more bounty in his garden.

I think what strikes me most about how Jesus sends his dear disciples out with next to nothing is that it points to the radical reciprocity involved in God's economy.

All God needs is us. And all we need is God. Period. Everything else is icing on the cake.

Going out with so little, **Jesus followers found that God truly was all they needed.** God truly was their daily bread. God truly supplied them with everything they needed to battle evil, to heal the brokenhearted, and to call people to follow in faith.

God showed them what it looked like to **rely on the hospitality** of strangers trusting that those strangers were a gift from God. How might we look at strangers with the same eyes? People who speak differently, eat differently, dress differently, worship differently?

God showed those 12 what it meant to live freely. To be able to share good news, but not bear the burden if it was not received with joy. The 12 learned God's grace toward them in shaking the dust.

Jesus is looking to send out a new group of 12. Will you and I be among them? If not, there will be 4 less hands to do the work. Oh, it will still get done. But how much more fun it will be if you and I go along on the journey.

Oh, and did I mention, you won't need to bring any bread. It's right here (pointing to the altar table). Enough for you. And enough to share.

### **Let us pray together:**

Your church is composed of people like me. I help make it what it is. It will be friendly, if I am. Its pews will be filled, if I help fill them. It will do great work, if I work. It will make generous gifts too many causes, if I am a generous giver. It will bring other people into its worship and fellowship, if I invite and bring them. It will be a church where people grow in faith and serve you, if I am open to such growth and service. Therefore, with your help Lord, we shall dedicate ourselves to the task of being all the things you want your church to be. **Amen.**