

⁷ Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

⁸ These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. ⁹ Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. ¹⁰ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. ¹¹ And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

¹² They went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³ They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. (Mark 6:7-13 NIV2011)

Go With Christ-Given Confidence

Recently I was able to take a couple of classes in Omaha. One of the professors teaching was my old Greek teacher. As he filled my brain with his knowledge, I also was filled with memories of his classes back at Martin Luther College. I think Professor Fredrich enjoyed messing with his students a little bit. I don't know if he ever confirmed it, but over the years students noticed an interesting correlation between the color ties he wore and days he gave quizzes. More often than not, he seemed to wear a red tie or tie with a little bit of red when he would give a quiz. So here you would have all of these pastor-track guys questioning each other, “Did he have a red tie? See any red today?” And if someone saw red, there would be some quick cramming before the inevitable quiz. You need to be prepared. Greek quizzes can be a terrifying thing. As I said before, I think the professor liked to mess with us a little bit. Some days he wore a red tie and wouldn't give a quiz. Other days he wasn't wearing a red tie and then he would give a quiz. I'd like to tell you I always was prepared for class, but...I remember the dropping of my stomach and sweaty palms as I heard, “Clear your desks. Time for the quiz.”

Obviously it's not just the quizzes in school. If you are prepared for something, if you think that you have enough, if you feel ready, you don't need to know all of the details necessarily, you can still have confidence. But if you don't feel prepared, if you don't think you have what you need, there's uncertainty coupled with nervousness, anxiety, frustration, and little willingness to follow through with the task.

I wonder how the disciples feel when Jesus sends them out. In Mark we just saw how Jesus' hometown treats Jesus and His message. They reject him. They are offended. The disciples are right there when it all happens. They see how people can react when you preach the Word. And now Jesus calls them together to send them out and do the same thing: preach the Word. After all, Jesus is just one man. One man can only do so much. He didn't call these twelve men simply to be his traveling companions. This is what they are called to do. So, Jesus calls the Twelve to him and sends them out two-by-two. This makes sense: they can encourage one another and show their message is valid. He gives them authority over impure spirits. Even the demons of hell will have to bow to them. But before the disciples head out on their adventures, Jesus has some very

specific instructions. First, what they can pack along: **“These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. ⁹ Wear sandals but not an extra shirt” (v. 8,9). Catch that? They can bring the clothes on their back, the sandals on their feet, and a staff in hand. That’s it. Then, when get to a town: “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. ¹¹ And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them” (v.10,11).”** That’s it. Go, preach Jesus’ message. Cast out demons. Heal the sick. When they are welcomed into a house, stay there. He doesn’t want them hopping around from place-to-place looking for the 5-star hosts. That would be very offensive. The Word already has a mountain to climb when it comes to our sinful nature, we dare not add to it. But if a place does not welcome them or listen to the Word, leave. Shake the dust off your feet on your way out and move on to the next town.

Again, I wonder what those disciples were thinking. Were there thoughts like, “That’s it? That’s all you are going to give us? Is this really enough? We are supposed to just preach the Word and trust that it’s going to work? We are just supposed to trust that someone will take care of us? What if there isn’t any money in the future? How can we be sure that our ministry will be provided for? What if things get tight? Where’s the budget line? What if things get tough? How can you be sure that it’s going to be okay? We’re just supposed to speak the Word, call them to repent, and they are going listen? That’s it?”

It’s not hard to imagine thoughts like this because that’s how many of our meetings tend to go. That’s how we seem to view or own personal ministries and sharing of God’s Word. How can we be sure that God has given us enough to do this? You know who you are; you know your gifts and talents. Speaking, sharing the Word—has God given me enough of the right gifts? Look at the pews and how many are empty. Look at the finances. Look at how many we are bringing in. Look at how actions don’t seem to change much less the attitudes. Has God given us enough to work with? Has he provided us with enough to use?

One might think the solution is having more programs, more opportunities, and the right combination will bring them in and keep them. Another might think, we need to have different type of people—different pastor?—who will be more charismatic, outgoing, friendly, real go-getters. There has to be something more that we can do!

Another is a bit more jaded: we’ve tried. Nothing has changed. They know where the church is; they should know better... Still another, I’m just here for my Sunday morning thing because that’s what I’m supposed to do on Sunday. Someone else will take care of it.

We struggle to believe that Jesus has really given us everything we need to do this work. When there’s a failure to trust God will provide results in a failure to do the work God

gives us. This failure to trust is not something to just sweep under the rug and say, “Yeah, I really struggle with this sometimes.” We are talking about eternal matters here! God calls us to fear, love, and trust him above all things. Confess your sin and he is faithful and just and will forgive you. Shake the dust of that sin off from you; Jesus has taken it away. Now let’s go do the work.

Jesus would not have sent out his disciples ill-prepared. He doesn’t send them out to fail. He gives them exactly what they need to do the job. The one who is greater than all of creation through whom all things are made and in whom all creation is sustained, whose name is above every name, sends his disciples out with that authority. They aren’t doing this work on their own—it’s by Jesus’ authority and with his strength that they do it so that even the demons of hell must listen. Yes, they are powerful. And, yes, Satan is strong. But Jesus is stronger. Satan’s head is already crushed. They are going to people who are looking for purpose, identity, and place. The message they bring gives just that: “**Repent and believe the good news!**” Repent, turn from your personal observations and human thoughts of what makes a fulfilled life. Turn from that to Jesus Christ, who is your Lord. In him you have a purpose-driven life and God fits you into his purpose. In Jesus you know who God is and who you are—forgiven of sins, loved more than you can imagine, raised to new life, and a seat waiting for you with the One who rules all things for the good of his people.”

And what happens? It works. The disciples go out maybe with a little trepidation and uncertainty; who can blame them? It’s something new and different. At the same time, I’m sure there’s excitement. It’s exciting when you get to join in the work. It means you are trusted to get the job done. So they go. I’m sure there were times when it didn’t go so well. That’s why Jesus warns them what they should do when that happens. He says, “**Shake off the dust of your feet as a testimony against them.**” The disciples aren’t judging the people; their own rejection of the Word is evidence against them. If they reject this Word, they are on their own before God. Lord willing, such towns would see this, confess their sin, and turn to the Lord. That’s the desire after all! But notice, Mark makes no mention of those towns. Instead, his focus is on those who do welcome the disciples into their homes. The Word is received. The disciples cast out many demons. They anoint and heal the sick. The work of the Lord is not in vain. And these guys got to be a part of it.

So where do you see yourself in this account? Are you the towns who receive the Word? Are you Jesus’ followers who he sends out to share the Word? Yes. You have received the Word. With your prayers and with your offerings, your love and your care, you support Gospel servants—called workers—and the continued spread of God’s Word. You provide for their needs. You welcome them into your homes, your lives, and your family here in Valentine. I thank God for you.

At the same time, as Jesus sends out his disciples two-by-two so they are not alone, so he didn’t send me out to do this work on my own. He’s given me you. Those who hear

the Word share the Word, not because you have to but because when you have good news, you share it. A baby is born, sickness overcome, life is going well, you don't keep that to yourself. We share good news. In a world that is filled with so much bad news, so much pain, so much frustration and sadness, you have something here that actually helps. So many are trying hard to get through life, dealing with the daily grind, looking and searching for something worthwhile and meaningful. Some find meaning and things that are worthwhile. But it's not lasting. You have good news that they need. For sinful hearts that do not trust God, you have a Savior who lived and died for you and rose again to bring a new life with him. He doesn't leave us to struggle alone. He gives you his body and blood in the Lord's Supper to strengthen our faith and trust in him. He has so thoroughly forgiven your sins that he wants you to be part of his work. You have the tools for the job: it's his Word. You have the message: Repent—turn from what this world has to offer to Jesus who is your Lord. He forgives you, loves you, and raised you with him to give you new life and a place with him.

And now we get to go out starting at home with your spouse, your family, your friends, our community. He sends you out to heal the broken-hearted with the assurance that nothing in all of creation can take Jesus' love from them. He sends us out to anoint with love that cares for each other's bodily needs, to love neighbor by serving each other (including the ones you might not be the biggest fan). He sends you out to share the peace that Jesus gives to those struggling with the real frustrations life. This peace doesn't necessarily mean things will get better soon. It is peace that we aren't at war with God. He fights on your side. Jesus is with you. He hasn't left you. His promises remain true.

Trust that God will provide. We don't know how, we know he will. Share God's Word. The programs are nice. We love welcoming more people in through BIC and baptisms. We need the offerings to do this important work. At the same time, the purpose of the church is not to bring more money in, have fuller pews, being what this world would say popular or successful. The purpose of the church is to go out and share the Good News that Jesus died and rose again and sins are forgiven in Him. You already have the tools. You go with Jesus' authority and his Word. So, go with Christ-given confidence. Amen.