

SERMON
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“We are Agents of Grace”

July 15, 2018

Mark 6:1-13

In today’s gospel lesson, Jesus returns to his hometown of Nazareth after spending the last several months travelling with his 12 disciples – He has been preaching, teaching and healing all over the countryside. People come from far and wide just to get a glimpse of him...just to be in his presence. He has earned the respect and loyalty of many...especially his 12 disciples. He has cast out demons, he has healed the sick, raised a little girl from her deathbed, he has calmed a stormy sea...

This is a story of a hometown hero if I have ever heard one.

The headline in the Nazareth News would read...” Hometown boy returns – a teacher, a healer, a miracle worker...what can’t he do??!!”

Initially, the folks in Nazareth agree – they are amazed and impressed. The village is a buzz with all the chatter and excitement.

But then, people begin to talk amongst themselves, as people often do. “Who does he think he is? – isn’t he just Mary’s son? – isn’t he just a carpenter? – who does he think he is coming into town acting all important and uppity up... Let’s remember that we really don’t even know who his father is for sure!!!”

Why is it that when feelings of insecurity surface, as humans, we tend to lash out – bring people down a few notches?....

What is interesting and maybe a reflection on the townspeople of Nazareth’s suspicious and resentful attitude about Jesus, is Jesus’ inability to work miracles there – he is able to do some healing but not much ...

Mark doesn’t give us any explanation for this...

but could it be a reflection of how much of a part that we play in God’s work in the world... maybe more than we might think...

How open are we to being a part of God’s work in the world? How willing are we to be a conduit for God’s love and healing in our own lives and those whose lives we touch?

As commentator David Lose says ‘Do we, from day to day, have a desire to participate in God’s work to bless and care for creation or do we resist that?’

And do those decisions make a difference in how God’s power to heal and care takes expression? God

shares God's ministry of reconciliation and healing with us, which means that each and every day we have before us the opportunity to be channels of grace and mercy to people and a world desperately in need of grace and mercy.'

What would that look like in our lives today? I think what we need to keep in mind is that we don't have to be miracle workers – I believe it is the little things we do each day that can make a world of difference in the lives of others. We all have gifts – different gifts – that is what makes us unique – the important thing is that we share our gifts with the world. Our gifts have been given to us by our creator – our gifts are made for sharing – to enrich the lives of those whose lives we touch each day – and in return, our lives are enriched.

That is the beauty in all of this. If we all share our gifts and enrich the lives of others – and those whose lives we have touched do the same – can you imagine the difference we could make in the world?

"We are pilgrims on a journey, fellow travellers on the road. We are here to help each other, walk the mile and share the load. Brother let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you, pray that I may have the faith to let you be my servant too...." –

As we turn to the second part of Mark's gospel today, it seems that the stage has already been set with what we have just heard. The second part of today's gospel is Jesus sending out his disciples two by two to go out into the countryside to continue to teach and heal using the word of God. The disciples are sent out with just the clothes on their backs – they are completely dependant on the hospitality of those they will be visiting.

Talk about packing lightly!

I can't help but wonder how Jesus might say this to us today. You and I are definitely weighted down with more 'stuff' than Jesus' first disciples were, and on top of that, the 'stuff' we have definitely outpaces anything first century folks could have ever imagined.

Today, I expect Jesus would not only say to **pack lightly**. I imagine he would ask and encourage us to leave behind at least one thing in particular. I am sure most have already guessed. I'm pretty certain that Jesus would look right at me and tell me to leave my cell phone/tablet and laptop behind.

By leaving all the 'stuff' behind, we are ridding ourselves, even if just for a short period of time, of all that gets in the way of us truly seeing the world God made and the people who inhabit it.

PAUSE

I think God's intent is to have us set aside that which makes us believe that we are fully self-reliant – self sufficient - in this world...when, in fact, we are not.

It would be to our benefit, as hard as it is for us to set aside the time. I think it would give us the

opportunity to appreciate the community God is longing for us to experience and be part of. To do all we can to see, **to really see** those to whom we are sent.

If we don't take the time to set things aside... to focus on all those and all that is around us...will likely mean that whatever gifts we are meant to share with the world will neither be given nor received in the fullest way God intends them.

To honour what Jesus is asking us, as his modern day disciples, 'packing light' , for me, at least, would surely mean leaving all of my electronic devices behind, if only for an hour, a morning, a day.

Indeed, wouldn't that be an interesting experiment for all of us — to just leave it all behind for a little while so as to truly and clearly experience God's good gifts for us now and to be better able to share those gifts with the world?

Human nature is a tricky thing. We are not perfect. We are insecure – even uncomfortable in our own skin sometimes. We don't want others to think that we need anything – We want others to believe that we are independent – self reliant. No wonder there are folks who don't understand how to there for others. The folks in Nazareth were too busy feeling that little twinge of envy in the pit of their stomachs....to listen to Jesus and celebrate all that he brought to them while he was in Nazareth.

We are all called to minister to one another and the rest of the world. The townspeople of Nazareth and all of humankind need to focus on how we can serve each other – focus less on the things in our lives and more on the people in our lives.

“We are pilgrims on a journey, fellow travellers on the road. We are here to help each other, walk the mile and share the load. Brother **let me be your servant**, let me be as Christ to you, pray that I may have the faith to **let you be my servant too**....”

AMEN