

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost – July 4, 2021

“...and began to send them out two by two...” (Mark 6:7)

Jesus, after getting resistance to his ministry and message in his hometown of Nazareth, regroups and sends out his twelve disciples to preach the good news and to represent him out in the greater world. Jesus sending out these twelve confused men is surprising, because the disciples show they aren't necessarily the sharpest knives in the drawer. Yet, Jesus sends them out to do his work.

The hometown boy, Jesus, is dismissed as being “only” a carpenter from a town where nothing good comes out of it. The crowd listens to him and witnesses his miracles, but they respond with, “Where did this man get these things?” Interestingly, Jesus responds to the crowds' questions about him and his work by pairing up and sending out the Twelve Disciples. These are the ones who “followed him” (6:1). Those who follow are now being sent. It's rather amazing that these disciples, who have shown they are quite confused and really don't understand him, are now sent by Jesus to do some of the same ministry he did. Jesus gives them the same power that he himself wielded.

The Twelve are sent out with little instruction with no bag or change of clothes, and are to live as beggars relying on the goodness of strangers. They perform exorcisms and cure the sick. Yet these good works do not stop the opposition that thwarts them along their journeys. It was best just to shake the dust off and move on. Followers of Jesus do good work and suffer rejection, just like Jesus did.

But Jesus isn't surprised by all this. He responds to their rejection by sending out his empty-pocketed, poorly prepared, and misunderstanding disciples to do what he wants done. His intentions for the world will not be hindered or stopped by human or demonic forces, even if he has to send out some below average followers to do his work for him. He sends out the unlikeliest of people, that is, people like us. Though we don't understand everything about Jesus, and are maybe confused about what we *do* know, it is the nature of Jesus to work through ordinary people like us, to send out his disciples to take his good news to the streets. What is Jesus' plan for bringing the world back to himself? He sends US! Amen.

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