



Hear the Word

from Pastor James N. McEachran



Gather... Encourage... Equip... Send...

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

July 8, 2018

Settled and Sent

Mark 6:1-13

These past weeks, a common theme---GROWING FORWARD. In a season of Sundays, it has been miracles recorded in Mark that have been our foundation: 1) Three weeks back, a man brought to Jesus who could not hear or speak. Healed and a challenge to Listen UP! 2) Then, a man who could not see brought to Jesus. Healed and a challenge to be Seeing OUT! 3) Last week, great crowds with Jesus and a ruler of the synagogue appeal to Jesus that He heal His daughter. Then, on the way, a woman with a flow of blood. She touches Jesus' garment and is healed. Then, Jesus arrives at the home of Jairus and his daughter is raised from the dead. A challenge to remember that we too are Healed and Held.

Jesus has been about the work of ministry. He comes home to Nazareth, with the hope that there might be a time of renewal; a bit of rest, disciples in tow and He goes to synagogue. To be at worship!

Recall that He had been teaching and healing with power from God; He has been in mission, but things turn, well, sorta strange!

Jesus teaches...resistance...hometown..."Where did he get so smart? Where did the wisdom come from? His works are so powerful! And he is only a carpenter." Then, offense comes along---"Hah, is not this the son of Mary, kid brother of James, Joses, Judas, Simon, and his sisters who are here?"

Is it possible? A teacher not welcomed in the place where he is known. Too familiar and among those with whom has he been around for years?

Those at synagogue simply could not bridge the past with the present. Remembering Jesus of old, they can't get Jesus of the present. And the consequences are difficult: No deed of power except a few hands on cures. And he marveled at their unbelief and moved on.

This is a bridge text from the past to the present. It is part of the human condition that we look back to the way we were and are, a time, unwilling to bridge to the future God has in store for us.

And Growing Forward, we need to hear the call anew, given with authority and the charge to go with the provision of the Holy Spirit---to witness, to mark life with actions of love and healing, confident in the Word and courageous in the mission shared in Jesus Christ. Knowing that as are a people GROWING FORWARD. SETTLED AND SENT.

Yes, there are three points:

Are we called? Ever felt called? Not just nudged but called to words, to actions, to new beginnings. Can you think of that moment?

What was it like? A burden? A light? An action which changed your life, your attitude? A moment which rekindled a relationship? Moved toward reconciliation? A new beginning. That is what a call is like, it was for Elijah, for Paul.

Are we called as a congregation rooted in the Spirit and with lives deeper in relationship to Jesus and to another? And if so, what are we called to in this time?

Our Mission Statement says it well: to be GATHERED, TO BE ENCOURAGED, TO BE EQUIPPED, THAT WE MIGHT BE SENT. A mission as old as the one in today's Gospel!

Make no mistake, on the firm foundation of Jesus, over 40 people has accepted the call to be engaged in Vacation Bible School. To become community of those who seek to grow and to help other grow in Christ and to care for the earth that God has given to us!

In the same sense, each of us is called to participate in the life of the Body of Christ: to learn, to vision, to serve that we might be faithful to the Confession of Faith that binds us to God, to the life we share in this place.

Is there resistance? Jesus calling, His mission met resistance from within and from without. Up to His hometown return, Jesus is called a blasphemer for forgiving sins, judged for the company He keeps, scandalized because His disciples don't fast, judged because His followers don't keep Sabbath; for healing on the Sabbath; called out of His mind. His own disciples would question Him, dodge him, betray Him, deny Him. And the religious and political leaders were often in His face.

Resistance within is often our reluctance to follow the Spirit's leading, to make decisions and mark commitments which lead us to communal and individual sharing of the gifts we have in sacrificial and sacramental ways to build the Gospel in our homes and in our communities and to the places where we find a degree of discomfort because we are shy of going two by two, or as a people who know that faithful living in Christ will make us uncomfortable and the word we share when we will not conform or enable actions that do not create a place for justice to flow, peace to prevail, and hope to be the path of our lives.

To count the cost of discipleship moves us to dream forward what it will be for us to be a mission outpost in an often dark world where convenience is the key and commitment is about what we want to do and community only when we are comfortable with the goals and outcomes.

My wise old mentor, he is only 92, once said that the Church is not called to conform but to reform; stagnation waiting for something new is the paralysis of a system waiting to die. And, at times, that is the state of the Church in our times and saying "If we only had, we could...." You fill in the blank!

Beloved, WE ARE CALLED! every single day under the Sign of the Cross.

Our Second Lesson is a clear example, a model of what it is to be Settle and Sent. To be nimble in response to the call of God. To simply, GO! Never alone! Count the number of cities and regions, note the number in the mission team. No small work is this adventure in keeping to the vision of Jesus to go to the ends of the earth.

Then, note the results when the Church does not believe it to be a time of crisis, but one of opportunity: "the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers daily." And when a new opportunity represented itself, "we immediately, tried to cross over...being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news."

Beloved in Christ, courage is the hallmark of the Church; renewal is the work of the Holy Spirit; this is not my church, it is not your church, it is Christ's Church!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the past is finished, the present is filled with possibility, the future is the time to be about dreaming, affirmed, caring and trusting that...

WE ARE CALLED TO ACT WITH JUSTICE,
WE ARE CALLED TO LOVE TENDERLY,
WE ARE CALLED SO SERVE ONE ANOTHER,
TO WALK HUMBLLY WITH GOD.

May it be so...settled in God's grace in Jesus...sent with one another to turn this world upright in the name of the Lord, Amen!