



Fifteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time (Year B)



Mark 6: 7 – 13

Jesus called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.

Jesus said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.”

So the twelve went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Reflection:

Jesus sends us out two by two. He tells us not to spend all of our time on having more than we need or moving from home to home; in this way we will have the time and energy to do what he needs us to do. Sometimes we can get so caught up in the busy-ness of looking after ourselves and our place in this world, that we forget that we have been sent by God for a purpose: to heal, to bless, to encourage, to forgive and to bring the message of faith, hope and love to those we are sent to serve.



Table Discussion (at mealtime):

Jesus wants all of us to be involved in carrying out his mission. “How can your family be part of God’s plan? What are the things you are willing to do?”



God Came Knocking at my Door (a bedtime poem):

God came knocking at my door, I was busy so I did not answer. Busy with what, I cannot say. He can come back some other day.

God came ringing on my phone, he asked to listen for just a minute. I had a friend on the other line. He can call back some other time.

Too often we're busy, all loaded with stuff; so much indeed, it's never enough. New toys, new clothes, the latest the best, we load ourselves down, unable to rest.

Let go of your burdens, travel lightly instead. Care less about things, and more about others. The poor, the sick, the aged and lonely, the ones who need care, your sisters and brothers.

A staff, no bread, no bag, no money, God's Word today may sound kind of funny. The less time we spend on things that will pass, the more we will have for things that will last.



Parenting Corner: A Mission-Oriented Family

Jesus' instructions, to each one of us, are geared towards mission. He wants us to travel light enough and free enough so that we can respond to his call and the needs of the community we live in and the people in need. He wants us to travel light enough so that we are not distracted from being involved in his mission in the world.

- If God came calling today, how flexible are we to respond?
- If God came calling today, what would stand in the way to our response?
- How is our family Mission-oriented?
- How do we encourage this in our children?
- Is there anywhere our family needs to change?
- What are you willing to do?

This Gospel can often lead to a house cleaning (getting rid of excess stuff) or an agenda over-haul. It can also lead to one new positive way to re-direct priorities.



The Little House Next Door:

The little house next door stands empty now. Where once she was filled with joy and laughter, and the smell of freshly-baked peach and apple pies, she sits sad and somewhat lonely, mourning a close friend. Seventy years is a long time after all; seventy years with only one owner.

When the young couple first moved in, full of dreams and aspirations, there was really only room for two. With two bedrooms the size of walk-in closets, and a single bathroom tucked away in a corner, everyone expected them to move to bigger quarters once children were born.

“It’s more than enough,” said the wife to her husband. “It’s more than enough for a family of four. After all, we know all our neighbours, we are close to the school and our church, why spend the money, the time and the effort, when it is better to use them to raise our children, serve our community and help those in need.

They had talked about moving once or twice after, but the conclusion was always the same. Rather than start over somewhere else, they decided to stay and build something lasting. Neighbours came and neighbours left, some homes were levelled, new homes were built, but the little house stood proudly, newly painted and scrubbed.

The children grew up and left one by one, returning for Christmas and holiday fun. The little house was quiet now, all cozy and snug, with flowers around her and a swinging chair for two.

“Do you know what?” said the husband to his wife. “I am glad we stayed from beginning to end. There may have been nicer homes and bigger yards, bigger rooms and brighter spots, but they all would have seemed so empty and large, especially now when we no longer need so much space.”

He died shortly after, not entirely unexpected. And though a sadness fell upon the little house, and his wife all alone, the neighbours all came with baking and food. “You baked for us, you fed us so well. You have always been there, it’s our turn to care. We’ll look after you like our own kith and kin.”

The years rolled on, and life did too. One day, a man came calling. “Won’t you sell me your house, we will give you good money? Won’t you sell me your house, we want to build a new church?” But she would not budge and she would not bend. She had lived there all her life, where else would she go. “You have enough room,” she answered. “Why don’t you build it around me? You have enough room, please leave me alone.” And with a smile and a wave, the man thanked her dearly. The two became neighbours and best of friends.

The little house next door stands empty now. Where once there lived a dear friend of Christ, who served him in her neighbours, there now stands a house too small to be bought. “What will we do with it?” Asked one of her neighbours. “What will we do? it’s really too small.” “We’ll use it to house the one’s who need shelter, the family and friends who come from away. We’ll offer it to those who have family in hospital. They can stay there for free and cook their own meals.”

The little house next door has found a new purpose. The little new house has made all new friends. She welcomes the stranger and gives them her shelter. She welcomes the struggling and gives them new hope.

Storytime

The Call of Abraham (a bedtime story):

A long time ago, in a big city called Ur lived a little boy whose name was Abram. Abram's family lived in a big house with a garden on the roof. Abram would spend most of his evenings sitting in the roof garden listening to his father tell stories from the past.

One evening, while Abram's family was all gathered on the roof, his father told the story of Adam and Eve. He also told them how God punished them, by sending them out of the garden he had made for them, for eating from the forbidden fruit.

"God sure is strict," Abram's brother said. But Abram did not agree. "If God asked me to do something," he said, "I would do it, even if it was difficult." That night Abram remained in the roof garden by himself, hoping that God would speak to him. But, despite his desire to hear God's voice, God remained silent.

Many years passed and Abram got married. Day after day, he would go up on the rooftop to spend some quiet time with God. Night after night, Abram placed his concerns before the Lord. But, even though Abram begged God to give him a son, God remained silent.

Abram was seventy-five by the time he heard God's voice. He was staring at the stars while sitting in his favourite chair in the roof garden. "Abram, Abram," the voice whispered. At first, Abram thought it was the wind, but the voice persisted. "Abram, Abram," the voice whispered again. "I want you to leave your home, this place you have lived all of your life, and I want you to go to a land that I will show you. There I will give you a son and make of you a large nation, and all the world's people shall be blessed in you."

"You want to do what?" His wife said to him, when first Abram told her the story. "Look at how old you are, and look at how much we own, surely you don't mean to leave this beautiful city and all your family and friends and go to a land you know not. If I didn't know you better, I would say you are crazy."

But Abram insisted. "I know it sounds strange and it all may seem funny, but there is no mistaking. God has spoken to me, and I promised to do it, even if it is the last thing I'll do." And, beginning that day, Abram started making preparations, selling many of his possessions, giving some of them away, and packing the things he could not do without. He also instructed his shepherds to drive his flocks ahead of him, and saddled the camels for his wife, his nephew and himself. All his friends laughed at. "Where are you going Abram?" They shouted. "Have you lost your mind?" "Are you going out to look for it?" "Don't be a fool!"

Through scrub grass and desert, over hills and through plains, Abram followed in the footsteps that God had set before him. Until, lo and behold, to the joy of his eyes, he saw the land God had promised and a place of his own.

If God came calling and whispered your name, would you answer his call, would you leave things behind? Would you trust in his words, would you follow them true?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKkpNbuVDfw> A reflection on being called