



Sermon, Sunday July 14, 2024 “Life as a Disciple of Jesus”

SCRIPTURE: Mark 6:7-13 ⁷He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff: no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, ⁹but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹If 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.” ¹²So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. ¹³They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Introduction: Jesus Sends Out the Twelve

Today is the 8th Sunday after Pentecost. Today’s text is the story of how Jesus sent out the twelve disciples. According to today’s text, Mark 6:7, Jesus called the twelve disciples, sent them out two by two, and gave them the power to control unclean spirits. The word authority in this verse is a translation of the Greek word **Exousia** (ἐξουσία). **Exousia (authority, supernatural power)** has a similar meaning to **dunamis** (δύναμις), which usually means miracle.

People are curious about controlling demons. These events could have been evidence that the Lord was with the people of Jesus’ time, but they were also criticized as evidence that evil spirits were with them. Some people thought that when Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute, Jesus did it by the power of prince of demons. (Luke 11:15)

In today’s text, Jesus tells his disciples not to prepare any items needed for their journey (bread, bag, money) other than a staff. We can accept this phrase as a teaching that if we want to live as a disciple of Jesus, we must rely only on the Lord. However, we may think that these teachings do not fit well with the modern society we live in. This is because if we do not prepare or plan our lives carefully, we may be left out in society’s competition. Nevertheless, please do not forget that relying solely on Jesus, the source of life, is the best way for us to live. Jesus prepared his disciples like this and sent them into the world.

Just as Jesus came to this world to proclaim the kingdom of God, disciples of Jesus must live their lives as disciples. Today’s text describes what the disciples sent by Jesus did. Verses 12 and 13 of today’s text say the following: **‘The disciples went out and proclaimed that all should repent, cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.’**

Body: The meaning of the three things the disciples did

What the disciples did after being sent by Jesus was to proclaim repentance, drive out demons, and heal the sick. The first thing Jesus’ disciples did was to preach repentance. However, the disciples did not just tell people to repent, but showed people the power to match their words. They had driven out demons and the healing of the sick. Casting out a demon is healing a sick mind, and healing a sick person is healing a body. The mind and body are distinct, but not separate, so driving out demons and treating the sick is the same thing.



At the time of Jesus, people thought that all human misfortune was caused by the power of demons. So they thought that if they could drive out demons, they could also cure physical illnesses. As today's text describes, Jesus gave his disciples **'the power to control unclean spirits.'**

The Greek word translated into English as unclean spirits (**πνευματῶν (πνευμάτων) τῶν ακαθάρτων (ἀκαθάρτων)**) in verse 7 is different from the Greek word translated into English as **demons (δαίμων)** in verse 13. However, what is clear is that both **'the unclean spirits'** in verse 7 and **'demons'** in verse 13 are spiritual beings who destroy the world created by God and our lives.

What the disciples sent to the world by Jesus must do is to control the forces that destroy life. The people of Jesus' time lived in an era that was far from modern science. They thought that the spiritual beings who destroy the world created by God and our lives were demons. Even though ancient people lack natural scientific knowledge compared to modern people, the people who wrote the Bible were people who understood and penetrated the essence of life more accurately than we do.

Although mankind may have made tremendous progress in scientific civilization, human existence has not changed in the past or present. Whether it was in the past or now, humans still need to eat and poop. All humans get sick, grow old, and die. Humans love and hate each other. Some people are altruistic, and some are selfish.

Even though modern people live better economically than ancient people, this does not mean that humans' cruel nature has disappeared. In fact, there is more killing than before. I hope you will not make the mistake of looking down on the teachings of the Bible based on modern natural science.

We who live today experience the same spiritual forces of darkness that the Bible describes as unclean spirits or demons. These forces are the forces that destroy the good life created by God.

War continues in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip in Palestine. This causes numerous victims every day. Children, women, and the elderly die because of war. There are many people who have committed suicide or suffered from addiction to alcohol, drugs, gambling, or pornography, not only due to war but also to various problems in life. Ultimately, 'money' is at the core of all these problems. These things happen because money has become the purpose of human life and people have been reduced to a means for 'money.' If we start mentioning these social phenomena one by one, there will be no end to them.

In the end, being possessed by an unclean spirit and a demon means that humans have lost the freedom granted by the Lord. People possessed by unclean spirits and demons cannot control their own lives. This is like how people addicted to alcohol, drugs, and internet games have no control over their lives.

Some people think of themselves as rational and free people. However, there are more cases where it is neither rational nor free. People are not as smart as they think they are. So the Bible describes people as creatures and sinners. This is not meant to belittle human existence. This is said to emphasize that one must be able to accurately see the essence of a person.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! Please think about how many times we become caught up in bad thoughts and lose the abundant freedom that the Lord has given us. Even when I look at myself, there are times when I speak well on the outside, but on the inside, different thoughts dominate me. If something like that happens, I have no choice but to admit that I am not a free person.

However, according to today's text, the disciples 'cast out many demons.' What does the disciples' ability to cast out demons in today's text mean?

There are words from Paul that express the reality of the disciples and early Christians of Jesus' time. **Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:26: "Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth."** This is a realistic representation of the disciples and Christians at the time. This verse makes it clear that the power of the Christian life comes not from one's own righteousness but from faith through Jesus Christ.



So, what does the disciples' ability to cast out demons in today's text mean? The disciples' ability to cast out is 'faith.' Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to escape from the evil forces that destroy life.

Although Jesus' disciples were neither political leaders who could change the world justly nor rich people with social influence who could renew the world with money, they fully believed in Jesus.

The words 'repent' proclaimed by the disciples in today's text have the same meaning as **'trust in Jesus.'** We are people who believe in Jesus, like the disciples in the text. Paul describes what this faith is like in Philippians:

"What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith." (Philippians 3:8-9)

Through this verse, Paul is saying that being recognized as righteous by the Lord is the only way for humans to be free from everything other than the Lord. However, the problem is that being acknowledged by the Lord feels too far away. So, how can we experience being recognized by the Lord?

Conclusion: The Blessing of Living as a Disciple of Jesus

Now let's summarize today's message. The only way to receive recognition from the Lord as right and to gain unique human freedom is to get closer to Jesus Christ. That is, to become a disciple of Jesus. This is not imitating a disciple but living as a disciple of Jesus.

Peter confessed in Matthew 16:16, **'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'** John 8:32 declares, **'Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'** These two Bible verses mean that we experienced God's salvation through Jesus Christ. Those who have this experience are given the gift of power to control the unclean spirits that destroy human freedom. I hope you have the blessing of living as a disciple of Jesus. **Amen.**

