

**The Memoirs of Peter
Jesus' Official Representatives**

Mark 6:7-13

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As you know if you've been around our church any time at all, I am the last of ten children. Often when people learn that they say something to me like this, "Oh, so you're the baby of the family." My response is always, "No, I'm the youngest; my next oldest sister was the baby." As some sibling rivalries go ours was fairly tame but from my perspective my sister struggled fairly consistently with the mistaken impression that she was in fact in charge. So, it wasn't uncommon for her to give me orders, or at least to try and then for me to refuse. It went something like this. "You need to come inside and put away your toys." To which I would respond. "No, I don't." To which she would usually respond with something like this, "if you don't, I'm going to go tell Mother." Now that was something for me to stop for a moment and consider but often, I'd call her bluff and just say, "oh just go ahead." But occasionally attached to another one of her commands my sister would add the words that brought serious attention to my ears and heart. It was the dreaded words, "Daddy said. Daddy said to come inside and clean up for supper." Now it was something different. We had now ratcheted up to a new level. She was claiming to be merely the mouthpiece for our father. She had not come as my sister but as his official representative. She had come with all the weight of his authority behind her. When that happened all my usual arguments and refusals were set aside, and I immediately accompanied her inside.

You know this same basic principle that was so simple that we all experienced it as children, this practice of proxy is what that is, permeates of all life, whether it's in the home or the workplace or the government. Even in the affairs of nations they all have their embassies with their ambassadors in many of the world's key countries. So that around the world there is someone who is the official voice of that government. The same basic principle was the principle with Jesus Christ. He was by His own statements the official representative of His Father on earth. He in turn identified twelve men who would be His official representatives in the world, His proxies. They would go on His authority, they would speak for Him, they would say it's not the

twelve of us saying this, instead it is Jesus saying this. Jesus chose twelve to be His official representatives. And tonight, as we come back to the gospel of Mark, Mark 6, Jesus sends them out for the first time. I invite you to turn with me to Mark 6 and we're going to begin in Verse 7.

Jesus sends them out both with genuine ministry to do and it's kind of a test run of what they will eventually do without His physical presence. Now first you need the background. The background is this, Jesus has just returned to His boyhood home, He preached on the Sabbath in the local synagogue, and He was roundly rejected. His background then for sending out the twelve is found in Verse 6, He wondered at the belief of His hometown, "and then He was going around the villages teaching." But obviously there were more villages that He Himself could get to if He went alone.

Matthew's account says,

"Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. And seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.'"

Mark 6:7 is the answer to that prayer. Let's read it together.

"And He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs and gave them authority over the unclean spirits; and He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff- no bread, no bag, no money in their belt- but to wear sandals; and He added, 'Do not put on two tunics.' And He said to them, 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave town. Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.' They went out and preached that men should repent. And they were casting out many demons and were anointing with oil many sick people and healing them."

Now the point of this paragraph is to show us how Jesus authenticated the twelve as those who would have authority to represent Him in the world. And what they do here in this passage is a kind of foreshadowing, a kind of preview of their future ministry. Now the focus shifts kind of in the middle of this passage, if I were to outline it for you, we could call Verses 7 through 10 the ministers, that is the apostles and their duties and Verses 11 through 13 the mission. So, let's look at these two parts starting with the ministers in Verses 7 through 10, the apostles.

There are several realities about them that are made clear in these verses. First of all, they were appointed by Christ's authority. Verse 7 says, "He summoned the twelve and began to send them out in pairs and gave them authority over the unclean spirits." Now first of all we're reminded here obviously that we're talking about - the 12. This is that select group Jesus handpicked. Back in Chapter 1, He called them to be fishers of men, to be His disciples. In Chapter 3, He had officially appointed them as apostles, as sent ones. As those who would be His representatives. In fact, look back in Chapter 3:13 just to remind us of what He did on that occasion. Verse 13 of Chapter 3, "He went up on the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted." So out of the larger group of disciples, Jesus appointed twelve. Verse 14 says, "so that they would be with Him, and He could send them out to preach." Notice their job description included two things, "that they would be with Him and that He send them out to preach and to have authority to cast out the demons. And He appointed the twelve." and their names are listed.

Notice again those two parts of the job description, "To be with Him." This had happened now for months. They had spent 24 hours a day, 7 days a week with Jesus Christ. They had benefitted from His public ministry. They had heard all of His teaching to the multitudes and crowds, as well as His private interaction with them. The second part of their job description was, He was going to send them out to preach. Here is the first time in Mark 6:7 is the first time that actually happens. Until this point, they had been mostly companions of Jesus, but they had been primarily spectators rather than partners. And He's going to send them out.

Now I don't know about you, but I find that greatly encouraging. Because let's just be honest, to date, the twelve have not proven themselves to be honor students. Is that fair? They've been exasperating, they've been even condescending to Jesus, they've been slow to believe. They have been bad students. As someone said they're not honor students, the closest they ever came to honor was, "yes, your honor, no, your honor." There's a note of grace here. Jesus is going to send these guys out at this point to represent Him. One commentator, James Edwards says, "The sending of these particular individuals testifies that the fulfillment of the word of God depends not on the perfection or merit of the missionaries but on the authoritative call and equipping of Jesus."

So, Jesus is sending out the 12. The 12 He chose, the 12 He's prepared and He's sending them to the cities and villages of Galilee, right around where Nazareth and Capernaum were. This is probably the third tour of Galilee, the first two are mentioned in Chapter 1. And notice what it says in Verse 7, "He began to send them out in pairs." Literally the Greek says duo duo, or in English two two. Matthew tells us who the pairs were. And they're quite interesting. Look back in Matthew for a moment, Chapter 10:2. This is the parallel passage, same event recorded by Matthew, and he lists their names, and He pairs them up. "Now the names of the twelve disciples are these, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother:" There's the first pair, so brothers. Second pair brothers as well, James and John and they went out. And then you have the other pairs, the last one's pretty interesting as well, "Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him." An interesting ministry pair to have just been a fly on the wall and listened in to wouldn't it? But at this point He has given the same authority, He is preaching the gospel, and even power to do miracles.

Now why in pairs? Why did Jesus do this? Well, obvious reasons, companionship, mutual encouragement, but also it was the past history of Israel. If you look back in Ecclesiastes, you see that it was recommended that two are better than one because of the mutual encouragement they could be to each other. Jewish alms collectors went out in groups of two. John the Baptist sent his disciples out in two. The early church sent the missionaries out in twos. And Jesus always

sent His disciples whether it's the 12 or whether it's the 70, regardless He sent them out. But the main reason I think He sent them out in pairs is because that was the requirement for true witnesses in any event. A single person could not be a witness for anything, it took two in the Old Testament law, Deuteronomy 17:6, "On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness." Deuteronomy 19 says the same thing, "on the evidence of two or three witnesses the matter shall be confirmed." And so, the disciples go out, duo duo, two two.

Notice Verse 7 also says that Jesus sent them out with His authority. And to make that clear He gave them the same kind of power He had, that is the power to cast out demons. These works were not the major thing they were to do, these miracles confirmed their preaching ministry, authenticated their preaching ministry. This is part of how Judaism worked. These men were to be sent in the place of Jesus as the Judaism law stated, "the sent one is as the man who commissioned him." He comes with all the authority. These were Jesus' legally appointed representatives. He appointed them.

There's a second thing we notice about these ministers, and that is, they were to be dependent on Christ's provision. Look at Verses 8 and 9.

"And He instructed them that they should take nothing for their journey, except a mere staff-no bread, no bag, no money in their belt-but to wear sandals; and He added, 'Do not put on two tunics.'"

Now the bottom line of these requirements is that they are not to make excessive preparations, they're not to take extra provisions. Don't take anything with you for the journey, except a mere staff. The staff was a common traveling accessory in the first century. It was a walking stick basically that served not only to steady yourself on the uneven roads, but as a means of self-protection from both animals and criminals. And they could wear their sandals.

Now at some point here there appears to be a conflict between the gospel writers because here Mark allows them to take a staff and sandals. But if you read Matthew's account and Luke's account, they both seem to forbid the disciples from taking a staff and sandals. What's this about? Well, the best explanation is that in Mark, Jesus allows them to take the staff and sandals they already have, and Matthew and Luke make the point that Jesus didn't want them to buy new staffs and sandals for their journey. In other words, they weren't to make provision, they weren't to make preparations. They were simply to go. Notice they could take no bread. That is no food provisions. God would provide the daily needs they had. No bag, this refers to a travel knapsack, in our day a kind of backpack; a bag that they would fill with supplies for the journey. Now remember they're traveling from village to village in Galilee, in a small area. There were no all-day journeys, all day travel days. This command was to keep the disciples from kind of hedging their bets and having some provisions just in case.

They weren't to take their money belt. This was, as you know you thought money belts were new, they're not. This was a kind of cloth girdle in which small coins were kept close to the body, you, couldn't be easily taken. In the old days before ATM's and some of you are even old enough to remember this, if you were going on a trip you needed extra cash, it was hard to get cash and so if you were going on a trip you went to the bank and you took extra cash and put it in your wallet or purse and took it with you because you had no idea what might happen. Jesus was telling them don't do that. He's telling them on this trip, rather than be prepared for the unexpected; they needed to learn to trust in God to provide for them. No extra provisions and no money to buy them. And he adds, don't put on two tunics. The tunic was the inner garment shaped something like a very long T-shirt that went to the ankles or the ground. In Galilee it would not have been uncommon for a shepherd who needed to stay out at, with his flock at night to put on two tunics to stay warm. In other words, Jesus was telling the disciples here that they didn't need to worry about not having a place to stay, take two tunics just in case they don't have a place to stay and have to stay outside at night, God would provide and prepare a place for them to stay. And so, they were to trust in this as well in God's provision.

Now understand that this is specifically to the disciples for this specific mission. I need to say that because you need to understand that this passage is not a call to Christian asceticism. There

are a number of groups that use passages like this one as well as for example Jesus' interaction with the rich young ruler to justify positions such as the Roman Catholic Churches vow of poverty. If you're really going to be spiritual, that's what you need to do. You say, they teach that? Yeah, here's the catholic encyclopedia. "It is possible to be rich and married and held in honor by all men and yet keep the commandments and to enter heaven. Christ's advice is if we would make sure of everlasting life and desire to conform ourselves perfectly to the divine will, that we should sell our possessions and give the proceeds to others who are in need and that we should live a life of chastity for the gospels sake and finally that we should not seek honors or commands but place ourselves under obedience. These are the evangelical councils and the things which are counseled are not set forward so much as good in themselves as in the light of means to an end and as the surest and quickest way of obtaining eternal life."

So, in other words, the surest and quickest way to obtain eternal life according to the catholic encyclopedia is to sell all your possessions and live a life of poverty and that is based on texts like this. But it's not just Catholicism where these ideas are flourishing. In a push back from the excesses of the last 25 years and in conjunction I think with the emerging church movement, there's a growing interest among evangelical Christians in a monastic lifestyle that includes a modern kind of a vow of poverty. Couple of years ago, *Christianity Today* had a cover story entitled, *The New Monasticism*. This movement is fueled by guys like Shane Claiborne and others. Basically, they argue from passages like this one, that if we're going to serious about serving Christ, we should move from the suburbs to the urban downtown and we should live in a kind of communal lifestyle neglecting all the stuff that's part of life.

If this were the only passage that we had, or just the interaction with the rich young ruler, we might think that this approach was always the right approach. But it's not the only passage. Later when Jesus was preparing this same group of 12 for a different mission, He did so with entirely different requirements. Look at Luke 22:36, on this occasion to the same group. He says, "But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy a sword."

Get whatever you need, Jesus said for this particular mission. So, understand then, that the requirements in Mark 6 are for a specific circumstance, a specific mission with a particular purpose in mind. Even the stipulations Christ makes here for the disciples in Mark 6 were not always what He commanded them. But on their first missionary journey here in Galilee He wanted them to learn dependence on God, dependence on God to provide for what they needed. Again, as one author writes, the barest of essentials ensures that they place their trust not in their supplies but rather in the One who sends them.

There is at the same time a timeless principle in what Jesus requires here of His disciples on this journey. He explains it in the parallel passage, Matthew 10. There he says, “for the worker is worthy of his support.” Jesus says I don’t want you to take anything with you because the worker is worthy of His support. As William Hendriksen writes, “Upon those who hear the gospel rests the obligation to provide for those who bring it.” That of course is a principle that’s throughout the Scripture. So, they were to be dependent on Christ’s provision, these disciples as they went out.

Thirdly, they were to be content with Christ’s provision. Verse 10, “And He said to them, ‘Wherever you enter a house stay there until you leave town.’” Now in Matthew, Jesus told them how to decide where to stay. In Matthew 10:11, “whatever city or village you enter; inquire who is worthy in it and stay at his house until you leave that city.” But once you’ve landed, Jesus says, once you’ve been invited, once you’ve decided where to stay, then stay there until you leave town. Why? Well, there might be a better offer with a much nicer home with a much nicer guest room and with a much more influential family and better food, and they weren’t to make that kind of decision. They were to be content with the best that they were aware of when they landed in that town, the best situation and stay there. Again, William Lane writes, “they were not to dishonor the home by accepting more comfortable provisions offered by another host.” Another commentator writes, “they must not be so fastidious that whenever some small detail was not to their liking in one home they immediately leave and enter another where the facilities seem to be more desirable and the food more palatable.” The bottom line is folks, if someone

was willing to care for them, kind enough to take them in, then the disciples were to remain in that home. Really this is a lesson in two things. This is a lesson in not seeking personal comfort in ministry, if something nicer opened up. And two, not being a respecter of persons if someone more important invited you. Just stay where you are. Be content with the provision God has made for you.

So that was His direction to the ministers but let's move on secondly to look at the mission. You see this in Verses 11-13. And He begins with the seriousness of the mission, Verse 11, "Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them." Notice anyplace, Matthew adds whether it's a city or a home. Note what the people had to do to get the response of this verse. "They do not receive you." That is, they didn't receive the ones Jesus sent. Now why is that important? Well, in Matthew's gospel Jesus explains. In Matthew 10:40 He says, "He who receives you, receives Me and he who receives Me, receives Him who sent Me." The failure to receive the ones Jesus' send is a failure to what? Receive Him. And so, this is serious. If they don't receive you and if they don't listen to you. That is, they don't accept your words as authoritatively coming from Me.

Now think about what this meant. This means that there were households, villages, and whole cities where the twelve could anticipate being rejected, because they were rejecting their Master. How were they to respond? Look at Verse 11. "As you go out from there" [If they don't receive you as from Me, and if they don't listen to you and accept your words as authoritative, then as you go out from there], "shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them."

This was a symbolic act and any first century Jew would have understood exactly what it meant because it happened all the time. It happened from the rabbis. This was a very common practice among the rabbis. Whenever they went out of the land of Israel and were walking and traveling on pagan soil, as they came back into Israel, they would take off their shoes and shake out the dust, the pollution from those Gentile lands. To make sure that the Holy Land wasn't in any way contaminated with that dust. It's as if the disciples were saying about those places that rejected

them and their message, you aren't even Jewish, you're pagan, you're like Gentiles. Even in the Promised Land there will be those who reject the Promised One.

So, what was the purpose of this little ceremony, shaking the dust? He says as a testimony against them. This wasn't an insult, it wasn't an act of vindictiveness, it was a witness intended to get them to think and to reconsider their response. It was a symbolic act of God's displeasure. In fact, listen to how Jesus explains the cities who will receive that act and their future. In Matthew 10:15, in the parallel passage, Jesus says, "Truly I say to you," [If you do that, if the city doesn't listen to you, if they don't receive you, you shake off the dust of your feet], "it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city."

Now think about that just for a moment. Jesus wasn't using hyperbole. Jesus was stating bare facts. It will be better for those I destroyed because of the rampant homosexuality in Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment than for those cities and homes and villages where you go, and they don't receive you. Wow. So, Jesus told them exactly what they should do and by the way, this continued to be the practice. If you look at Jesus' example of course, obviously with Nazareth we've already seen that He left Nazareth and never came back. But also, the apostles in the future. Look at Acts 13, you remember the story. Acts 13 Paul turns to the Gentiles you remember and when the Jews, Verse 50, "incited of the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them." Notice the words 'in protest' are not in the original text. This is exactly what Jesus commanded. "They shook off the dust of their feet against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit." You see it again in Acts 6. Do you know what the point was? The mission was a very serious mission. And to refuse to receive them was to refuse to receive Jesus.

One other thing to note about the mission, not only its seriousness but its real heart. You see it in Verses 12 and 13. Here's what the heart of the mission Jesus sent them on was, "they went out and preached that men should repent." They went out with the goal of reaching one part of Galilee, one group that is the Jews. Jesus makes it clear that was their mission in Matthew 10,

“don’t go to the Gentiles, don’t go to the city of the Samaritan’s but go rather to the house of Israel.” To the villages and towns and hamlets of Galilee. Even though the leaders had rejected Jesus, Jesus still wanted the people to hear the gospel. But this would be the final witness of Jesus in Galilee. After His final rejection in Chapter 7 by the Pharisees, Jesus leaves Galilee and only returns intermittently.

So, what was the heart of this final mission? Well back in Chapter 3 you remember, Jesus chose them to be with Him and to send them out to what? To preach. That was the priority then, that was the priority on this mission. It was the heart of the mission. The other two activities that are listed, casting out demons, and anointing with oil and healing, weren’t the main point. Those things were to confirm that Christ and His apostles were in fact who they claimed to be. By the way that’s revealed even in the Greek tenses of the verbs used in these verses. Preaching was the main thing and the content of their message that men should repent. Matthew adds, “as you go, preach saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” This is exactly what Jesus preached back in chapter 1:14 and 15. God’s rule is here, turn from you sin and embrace the One through whom the rule comes, Messiah. By the way, this oil that’s in Verse 13, is olive oil and although olive oil was used for a variety of purposes in the first century including medicinal, here it’s symbolic. It doesn’t do the healing; it’s symbolic of the healing and of the work of the Holy Spirit. There are passages like 1 Kings 1, Zachariah 4 where oil is used that way in the Old Testament.

So then, the big picture is this, Jesus prepares the 12, He commissions them, and He sends them out for the first time on their own. And after Jesus sends them out, Jesus continued on His own. Because Matthew finishes his account in Matthew 11:1 with these words, “When Jesus had finished giving instructions to His 12 disciples, He departed from there to teach and preach in their cities.” So, Jesus goes out. The 12 go out in six groups of two throughout the Galilee.

Now, as we look in our concluding moments here at the implications of this text, there are two that I think flow out of Jesus sending out the 12. The first is we find in this passage I think principles for all of those who minister on Christ’s behalf. They must be appointed by Christ, they must be dependent on God’s provisions through His people, they must be content with

God's provision whatever it is. As Paul says, I know how to be abased and I know how to live in plenty. They must take the mission seriously. They must be committed first and foremost to teaching and preaching, communicating on God's behalf, not our words, but His words. These are true of every legitimate minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. But while those are legitimate implications of this passage, they are not the main point of the passage.

This paragraph is included by Mark to show us one primary thing and it's this. Even during His lifetime, Jesus sent out the 12 that He had handpicked to minister in His place, and He intended them to be His official representatives, His official proxies or delegates and He gave them His authority. And then He gives them gifts that authenticate them as His ministers, His messengers and confirm their message. You see this in passages like 2 Corinthians 12:12, "the apostles did the signs of a true apostle." Signs, wonders, and miracles. You see it in Hebrews 2, turn over to Hebrews 2, Hebrews 2:3, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord," There's the first way the word was spoken. "It was confirmed to us by those who heard," So, you have those who heard, that's the disciples and it was confirmed to us by the disciples, "God testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." So here is the writer of Hebrews writing somewhere just before 70 AD and he's saying back when the Lord was here, He spoke. And He spoke to His sent ones. His official representatives. The 12 minus Judas. And He sent them to us, and He confirmed their word to us by miracles and signs and wonders, by various gifts of the Spirit according to His own will. And He confirmed that word to us through them. So, to receive the official representatives of Christ, to receive the 12 and their teaching is to receive Jesus. To refuse to receive them and their teaching is to reject Christ Himself. And folks the fact that the twelve aren't here tonight doesn't change that reality. Because you have here in your New Testament the writings that come from the pen of many of the 12, and their representatives as in Mark.

If you're here tonight and you really have to admit you're not a believer in Jesus Christ, you've never come to genuine faith. Jesus has sent the 11 to you in the inspired text of the New

Testament even that we're studying tonight. The question is will you receive their words, or will you reject them? Will you receive them, or will you not receive them? Let me remind you of the words of Jesus, truly I say to you for those who don't listen, to those who don't receive these sent ones of Mine, Jesus said it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for those who don't receive the ones I've sent. Folks, that hasn't changed. The fact that they're not physically here doesn't change the reality that He is still sending them to us through the message of the New Testament. To refuse to hear the apostles of Christ speaking through the New Testament is to refuse to hear Christ. To reject them is to reject Christ. To ignore them, to go on and live your life any way you want is to ignore Christ. And Jesus Himself says it will be more tolerable for the people that lived in Sodom and Gomorrah than it will be for you if you stand before Him.

If you're here tonight and you're a believer in Christ, Jesus wants you to know that He's still speaking with authority through His apostles, through His official representatives in His word. He pre-authenticated the New Testament for us by identifying and sending out those from whose ranks would come the authors of the New Testament plus the Apostle Paul and we are to receive their words, cherish their words, accept their words as if they had been spoken to us by Christ Himself. And to do anything less is to offend the One who sent them. They speak as His representatives. Let me just ask you honestly, how are you treating their words? Are you receiving them? Are you responding to them? Or will you take this book home with you tonight and put it on a shelf and not pick it up again until next Sunday? This is serious business. God in Christ has sent us His official representatives to give us His Word and to refuse to listen to them, to refuse to take them seriously to refuse to deal with them is to refuse Christ Himself. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You that You have given us a sure word. You have given us Your word forever settled in heaven and You've given it to us through those whom You appointed. We thank You, O God, for the entirety of the Scripture, but we thank You for those 12 men minus Judas who You appointed and gave the responsibility for being Your official representatives. Father, we

thank You that in them and those whom they appointed and approved like the Apostle Paul, Mark, Luke we have Your Word to us. Father, remind us when we pick up this book that these are Your official representatives hand selected and sent, sent on a mission to give Your word, may we receive them and their writings as we would receive You if You were standing here tonight, because You speak these very words. Father, we pray that You would make us serious about these things and I pray for the person here tonight who has played around with Your messengers and Your word, Father may they realize that they are storing up Your judgment for themselves and if they spurn the apostles whom You've sent, in the writings you've given us that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment than it will be for them. We pray Father for Your grace to be evident we ask it in Jesus' name, Amen.