**Jesus Sends Out the Twelve**

April 7, 2013

Mark 6:1-29

Key Verse: 6:7 “Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.”

The world in which Jesus lived looked dark. There were many unbelieving people, and the political rulers were slaves of Satan. What did Jesus do? Jesus sent his disciples out with power to drive out demons. In this way, Jesus challenged the darkness of the world. This passage reveals Jesus’ spirit to advance the kingdom of God, and Jesus’ wisdom to raise and send out disciples. Our time looks dark also. Let’s learn from Jesus how to challenge this world by faith in God.

I. Faith is a decision to believe (1-6a).

Jesus had been in Capernaum. In a few days, Jesus had revealed that he is the Lord of nature, Lord of the spiritual world, the Lord who heals chronic disease, and the Lord of life. Then Jesus left the vicinity of Capernaum and went to his hometown of Nazareth, about 20 miles to the southwest. When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. Jesus’ message had power and authority. When people heard him, they were amazed, and said many amens. Then they should have obeyed his teaching. Instead, they asked, “Where did this man get these things?” They called him “the carpenter,” despising him as a common laborer. They called him “Mary’s son,” implying that Jesus was an illegitimate son. They pointed out that Jesus’ brothers and sisters were ordinary people just like them. They concluded that Jesus was presumptuous for preaching to them and they took offense at him. What a contrast they make to those who just believed. Jairus just believed in Jesus’ word and fought against fear. Then he experienced the power of Jesus to raise his daughter to life. A bleeding woman touched Jesus with faith and was healed of her chronic disease. The hometown people had enough evidence to conclude that Jesus was God’s servant and to believe his message. But they discredited him and did not believe. Mark says that Jesus could not do any miracles there. The sick remained sick, and the demon-possessed remained as they were. These people missed Jesus’ blessing. Believing in Jesus is a decision. Some people believe without much evidence. Other people do not believe in the face of overwhelming evidence. In the end, each person must decide whether to believe in Jesus or not.

In his book, “The Case for Faith,” Lee Strobel compares two persons: Dr. Billy Graham and Charles Templeton. Charles Templeton was born and died in Toronto. Both were evangelists in the 1940’s. They preached the gospel boldly and creatively. As time went by, however, Charles began to have doubts based on his reason. He could not reconcile the love of God with the suffering he saw in the world. Once he saw an African woman on a magazine cover. She was holding her dead child in her arms, who died of starvation due to famine. Charles reasoned that a loving God would not have let the child die. He felt that he could not believe. So he became an agnostic. But Dr. Graham struggled. In God’s providence, a godly old woman encouraged him to just believe the Bible as the word of God. At last, Dr. Graham made a decision to just believe. His doubts disappeared and the Holy Spirit came into his heart. He began to preach with great conviction and power. It was the beginning of a fruitful ministry as an evangelist to the world. Faith requires a decision. We must decide to believe in Jesus. Those who do so are blessed. Those who do not will not be blessed.

God works through people who have weaknesses. If we want to dig for someone’s weakness we can always find something. Even Jesus, who is perfect, was despised based on his human background! However, if we acknowledge what God is doing, even through imperfect human beings, we will be blessed. Dr. Joseph Schafer’s original Bible teacher was a Korean missionary with an English problem. Sometimes Joe couldn’t really understand what was being taught. Sometimes Joe was showered with spittle by his excited Bible teacher. But Joe realized that the Spirit of God was working. So he decided to learn faith, accepting the spittle as a kind of baptism. If he had focused on the communication problem or cultural differences, he might have despised his Bible teacher. Then he would have missed God’s blessing through him. Instead, he acknowledged God and accepted God’s word. Then he found the love of God in Jesus and clear life direction. He has become an exemplary professor shepherd and house church leader for America and the world. Those who acknowledge the work of God will be blessed abundantly.

II. Jesus sends out the twelve (6b-7).

Jesus could have become discouraged by his hometown people’s lack of faith and their rejection of him as the Son of God. He could have despaired and done nothing for weeks and weeks. Instead, he acted positively. What did he do? He continued to go from village to village and preach the word of God. Then, he went even one step further. He sent the Twelve out on their first missionary journey. Look at verse 7. “Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.” Jesus looks like a commanding general who attacks his enemy on the battlefield. The spirit of Jesus is to advance, and never retreat. We learn several things from Jesus who sent out the Twelve.

**First**, Jesus had a vision to spread the gospel through his disciples. To attain this vision, Jesus helped them step by step. Until now, Jesus had shown them his divine character and example of serving through life together. It was an observation period. Now they were entering the practical training period. They would go out and do what they had seen Jesus doing. Bible students must grow to become Bible teachers. We should help them step by step to go out and evangelize.

**Second**, Jesus gave them authority over evil spirits. The only thing Jesus gave them was authority over evil spirits. Jesus displayed this authority throughout his ministry. Once, Jesus preached in a synagogue in Capernaum. An evil spirit caused a man to react strongly against Jesus. Then Jesus said, “Be quiet! Come out of him!” The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. In Gerasa, Jesus met a man possessed by a legion of demons. Jesus said, “Come out of this man, you evil spirit!” The evil spirit was exposed, shaken and subdued. Then, after Jesus restored the man’s identity and purpose by asking, “What is your name?” all the demons in the man came out and went into a herd of pigs. As we know, demons do not move by the power of money, or by the threat of nuclear bombs. But at one word of Jesus, demons are driven out. This is the authority of Jesus. Jesus gave this authority to his disciples. The disciples did not earn it or deserve it, it was given to them freely by Jesus. This was all they needed for a successful evangelistic campaign. Jesus still gives his disciples power to drive out demons in his name.

**Third**, Jesus sent them two by two. Why did Jesus send them out two by two? This is because each person can help support the other. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says, “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can pick him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to pick him up!” In UBF we engage in fishing on campus for many students inviting them to 1:1 Bible study. When we go out two by two to the campus, we are like the Twelve whom Jesus sent out. It is a great thing to see two by two going to the campus. When we go out two by two, Jesus is with us. When our coworker witnesses, we can pray for them and for the person who is listening. If our partner seems to be having trouble, we can take over the conversation. Together we can pray and build each other up.

III. Jesus’ instructions and the advance of God’s kingdom (8-29).

Some people think that as servants of Jesus, we must live totally by inspiration and do freely whatever we feel is right at the time. This is not true. Servants of Jesus must follow Jesus’ instructions. Just as good cooks follow the recipe to make a delicious meal, Jesus’ servants must

follow his instructions to have a successful ministry. Let’s see what Jesus’ instructions are.

**First**, depend on God alone. Look at verses 8-9. “These were his instructions: ‘Take nothing for

the journey except a staff–no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic.’” God’s work is not done by money or an organization. God’s work is done by the Spirit of God through those who depend on God. When UBF ministry began in Korea, students were very poor. Many church leaders told Dr. Samuel Lee and Sarah Barry that they could not do mission work because they had no money. But God’s servants believed that Jesus could do mission work through them without money. They depended on God alone, by faith. Now we see that more than 1,500 missionaries have gone out to over 90 nations of the world through UBF ministry. To be fruitful gospel workers, we must depend on God, and God alone.

**Second**, stay in one place. Look at verse 10. “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.” Jesus’ disciples should not move around seeking better accommodations or better people to live with. When God leads them to a house, they must stay there and make friends with that person or family. They must commit themselves in one place until the gospel is planted there. Then the seed of the kingdom will grow and bear fruit in that community for seasons to come.

**Third**, anticipate rejection (11). Look at verse 11, “And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet as testimony against them.” When people reject our message, we are discouraged. It seems that we have done something wrong. It seems that they are rejecting us. But Jesus is saying here that we should not take it personally. It is not we whom they are rejecting, but God. We cannot change their mind. When we preach the gospel, our work is done. We should shake off discouragement, but move on to another person. Luke 10:16 says, “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” When Jesus gave the disciples these instructions, he clearly wanted them to believe in the superiority of the gospel. They must have confidence in the absolute gospel and teach people by their attitude that the gospel is absolute and it should be taken seriously. Jesus teaches us that we must anticipate rejection, and not get discouraged or give up when we are rejected.

Look at verses 12-13, “They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.” The disciples’ message was simple and clear. It was “repent.” We see here that the disciples delivered the message that they heard from the Lord Jesus (1:15). The disciples did not create their own message. They didn’t give their opinion about something or talk a lot of theology, or political and moral issues. They simply were servants of God’s word. Their message “repent,” is the best message. Not only was it brief and to the point, it also could touch people’s conscience. Look at verse 13 again. “They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.” Their mission was both powerful and successful. According to verse 14, even King Herod heard about all these things. The work of God through the disciples shook the stronghold of Satan. In spite of all opposition, the kingdom of God was advancing, overcoming the evil of the world.

From today’s passage we learned Jesus’ vision for world salvation. Jesus called the Twelve and sent them out two by two. He gave them authority over the evil spirits. When they obeyed, God gave them victory. God used them to spread the good news through the message of repentance. In our times, God wants to use us like the Twelve. God has given us authority through faith in Jesus to do his gospel work. Let us have faith and trust and obedience to Jesus. May God help us to challenge University of Toronto students as Jesus’ twelve disciples challenged the people of their times.