

In the previous passage, Jesus had been rejected in His hometown. Now He is reaching out to other areas through the disciples, preparing towns for the evangelism that will come after the Holy Spirit is poured out (Acts 1:8ⁱ).

⁷ And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. Mark 6:7 This begins a section on Jesus' third tour of Galilee preaching in the villages. We saw a preview of this in Mark 3:14,15 *¹⁴ And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and have authority to cast out demons.* Now it is time for Jesus to send them out two by two. I see it as a training mission. Before long, He will no longer be physically with them. They need to experience evangelizing without Him personally present in body.

Jesus is using the principle from Ecclesiastes that two are better than one for they have a better reward for their labor (Ecclesiastes 4:9ⁱⁱ). They can support and encourage each other. Hughes tells us, *The wisdom in this lay in the fact that having two witnesses met the legal requirement for authentic testimony (Deuteronomy 17:6ⁱⁱⁱ; 19:15^{iv}; Numbers 35:30^v). Moreover, this provided mutual encouragement and prayer for ministry. John the Baptist employed the same technique (Luke 7:18, 19^{vi}), and so did the Early Church (Acts 13:2, 3^{vii}; 15:39–41^{viii}; 19:22^{ix}).*^x

As His Apostles, or we could say select representatives, He gave them authority over the unclean spirits. The account of this mission is also in Matthew and Luke. Matthew adds that they also had authority to heal every disease and every affliction (Matthew 10:1^{xi}). Because the Holy Spirit had not yet been given, they needed this authority to demonstrate that the Kingdom of Heaven was breaking in. It demonstrated that God's kingdom was arriving. The Scriptures that spoke of God being present had come, but not exactly as most people thought of it. The Apostles would cast out demons with a word just as Jesus had. He had demonstrated that authority and now they knew what to do. They could order a demon to leave a person in Jesus' name because Jesus gave them that authority. It still happens today, especially in the third world where many people are animists, worshiping animal and plant spirits. I have heard of some amazing accounts and witnessed them right here in Sedona. If you are in Christ and led by His Holy Spirit then you have this authority. If you believe and do not doubt you can do the same thing with Jesus' authority (11:23^{xii}). Just be sure the person desires to be freed, and that you act in faith (Matthew 12:43-45^{xiii}; James 1:6^{xiv}).

Some denominations excessively focus on these demonstrable gifts and teach that they are a sign that you have received the Holy Spirit. But in this case the Holy Spirit had not yet been given to them (John 7:39^{xv}). And consider the fact that this authority was given to Judas. Judas cast out demons, healed the sick, and preached repentance. He was partnered with Simon the Zealot. God distributes the gifts as He wills (1 Corinthians 12:4-7^{xvi}). At the final judgment some will claim access to heaven claiming they cast out demons in Jesus' name, but Jesus will tell them he never knew them (Matthew 7:22,23^{xvii}).

⁸ He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts—⁹ but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. Mark 6:8,9

Why are they not to prepare for their needs? Matthew 10^{xviii} account tells us that Jesus said it is because “*the laborer deserves his food.*” Jesus is teaching them to live by faith relying on God alone. The people who help to meet their needs are blessed by their words and will be rewarded from God for helping them. Jesus tells us that whoever gives you a cup of cold water because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward (9:41^{xix}).

Guzik tells us that, *There was a rule from the Jewish rabbis that you could not enter the temple area with a staff, shoes, or a moneybag, because you wanted to avoid even the appearance of being engaged in any other business than the service of the Lord. The disciples were engaged in such holy work (preaching the gospel and bringing God’s healing) that they could not give the impression that they have any other motive.*^{xx} That must have been a rule for a time either before or after the high priest Annas used the outer court like a marketplace. The language is very similar, so it may have been that the disciples understood the implications of their ministry being entirely focused on God.

I spent a number of years living like that in my late teens and early twenties, sleeping most nights in a sleeping bag, passing out tracts and trying to share Christ with people during the day. It was a cult, but we did live by faith and proclaim salvation through Jesus. Even with our distorted message, God provided all my needs. Sometimes we did without but not to the point of harm.

One of my mentors lived like this in Japan. He shared the love of Jesus in a private hospital. He had very little but did have a roof over his head and food to eat. God provided all his basic necessities. The Apostle Paul lived like that after he depleted his own resources in service to the Lord. The churches voluntarily met his needs and were blessed for it (Philippians 4:16^{xxi}).

This is why we support our missionaries, pastors, and other types of fulltime ministry. The pastors in our town used to meet once a month and taking the promise of heavenly reward for giving to God’s servants to heart, I would buy sandwiches for them all. I am spiritually greedy for a heavenly rewards, but only so I can lay it at my Savior’s feet. I figure that if He gives a reward it must be precious, so I will have something precious to give to Him out of gratitude for all He has done for me. What do we have to give in this life, but what came from Him anyway (1 Corinthians 4:7^{xxii})? We can never outgive Him as we are just giving back what we received from Him.

It is hard to receive from others because it is humbling. We want to be the givers. But when people bless you because you belong to Christ or to support your ministry, remember that they will have a heavenly reward. Receive it with gratitude. Just humbly thank them for their generosity. *The two problems we face with the issue of giving and receiving are being greedy to the point of craving wealth or being prideful and not allowing others to be blessed.* Be humble enough to receive and generous enough to give when God leads you to, while acknowledging that everything comes from Him.

This manner of life was not to be the norm for all believers in the future, but for now they were learning to trust that God always provides (2 Thessalonians 3:10^{xxiii}). Luke 22:35-37 tells us. ³⁵ *And he said to them, “When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?”* They said, “Nothing.” ³⁶ *He said to them, “But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.* ³⁷ *For I tell you that this Scripture*

must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' For what is written about me has its fulfillment." The tide would turn against Jesus as He did not meet the expectations of those who were looking for a king to oust Rome. That would mean the disciples were going to face the same persecution. We can trust God to provide our needs, but we also know that we live in a fallen world, and many have set themselves against Jesus and all who follow Him. We will be persecuted as He was (John 15:20^{xxiv}). And it is important to note that Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 53^{xxv} which tells of His death for our sins.

¹⁰ *And he said to them, "Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. ¹¹ And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them."* Mark 6:10,11 This was a very practical directive. Take the first offer for housing. In that culture there were no hotels. There were brothels where you could stay overnight, but obviously that would not be good for the disciples. Hospitality was considered an essential courtesy. Someone would certainly ask them to stay, which is unlike our culture. But once they did, they were not to take a better offer. That would be insulting to their present host.

Morgan suggests the following: *"First they preached that men should repent. That is a declaration that needs careful consideration. It does not mean that they told men to repent, but that they preached in such a way as to produce repentance."*^{xxvi} How would we do that? Well, if you tell people how wicked our hearts are and how holy God is, they should see the need to repent. But they also proclaimed that the kingdom of God was at hand (Matthew 10:7^{xxvii}). They would return to share how a just God can accept us through the righteousness of Jesus freely offers to us. The disciples did not yet understand the last part of the message. Repentance was preparing the way for when they would return with the Good News of what Jesus had done for them (Acts 10:36^{xxviii}).

If the message of repentance was rejected and no one would give them what was a common courtesy at the time and refused to listen to them, they were to shake off the dust of their feet and go on. This was a well-known custom at the time. When a Jew would leave a Gentile territory and returned to their homeland, they would shake off the dust from their clothes onto the Gentile land. The idea was that God was going to judge the land and they wanted none of that land on them. To do that in a Jewish town would be declaring them as unbelievers under the coming wrath of God. I hope you can see how harsh that would have appeared to a Jewish community. It was not a subtle sign, and yet it was done in mercy to get them to realize what they had done.

More tolerable than Sodom and Gomorrah implies that there are degrees of judgment just as there are degrees of reward. The more truth we hear the more accountable we are to obey our Creator (Luke 12:47,48^{xxix}).

Jesus had the disciples act in such a way to proclaim the seriousness of this point in time. Jesus' coming death and resurrection was about to change everything! They had the opportunity to receive the grace of God by faith taking all their sins. The yoke of the Law could be taken off as they donned the robe of Jesus' righteousness. But **to stay under the works of the Law once the ultimate sacrifice had been provided was to live in religious ritual that was no longer needed.** They had been looking forward in faith to the coming of the Messiah, but now if they reject Him, they reject the whole thrust of the Old Covenant and its blessings and go on living in the past but without meaning.

Every denomination that has rejected the atoning work of Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf is in the same boat, and that includes most of the mainline denominations. They have accepted the obvious lie that man is basically good and believe God would be barbaric to kill His son to save us. That is so prevalent because so many seminaries teach that. It is the pride of man that thinks we can be good enough for God and that the message of the Bible is for ages past and full of myths. It is a way to do whatever you please and still call yourself a good Christian, but that is not Christianity at all. The whole message of Scripture is how fallen we are. The daily news confirms this. As the Apostle Paul declared, ¹⁸ *For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.* ¹⁹ *For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."* 1 Corinthians 1:18,19

¹² *So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.* Mark 6:12 The message of the Apostles was the same at that of John the Baptist and Jesus. People need to repent (Matthew 3:1,2^{xxx}; Mark 1:15^{xxxi}). The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin (John 16:8^{xxxii}). We receive that conviction and seek a Savior, or we reject it and go our own way. It is never a popular message, but it is the most needed message. When you ask people about their chance of getting into heaven, if they do not know Jesus they will give you some percentage. Unless you have received the conviction of the Holy Spirit you think God is some nice old man upstairs keeping score on your behavior. Nothing could be further from the truth. He is holy and just. He cannot tolerate the presence of evil. His just nature demands that He punish it. That is why the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23^{xxxiii}). No one can be good enough because we are all born with a sinful nature (Romans 5:12^{xxxiv}). Unless we recognize the great difference between the holiness of God and our sinful behavior we will not see the need to repent. We will not seek a Savior. Jesus' death on the cross will just seem like a sad turn of events, a good man dying before his time instead of what it truly was. It was God in the flesh taking the punishment we deserve and crediting His righteousness to all who will repent (2 Corinthians 5:21^{xxxv}).

Perhaps the lack of genuine conversions is the fact that we avoid telling people of the fallen condition of man and our need to repent. We know it is offensive to the old nature in man. It wounds our pride. But our pride is what needs to be squashed. When we realize how short we fall from God's perfection we are humbled and realize the beauty and greatness of God's grace. Repent is not a word that normally comes up and can be misunderstood. But if instead we tell of our need to seek God's forgiveness and the need for our heart to be changed so that we desire what is good, the same idea is conveyed.

¹³ *And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.* Mark 6:13 I believe this passage and James 5:14^{xxxvi} are the only descriptions of anointing people with oil for healing. James tells us that the elders should anoint the sick with oil when praying for their healing. We see the apostles laying hands or only speaking to heal. There is also the Samaritan pouring oil on the wounded man on the road to Jericho. Oil was used medicinally but in this verse I understand it to be symbolic of the Holy Spirit. It is not that the oil has power, but it is an outward sign of our faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament priests and kings were anointed with oil for their ministry. It was symbolic of them being set apart with the Holy Spirit upon their lives. Here it represents the healing work of the Holy Spirit.

With the authority Christ gave the Apostles, they did what Jesus was doing (John 20:21^{xxxvii}). Demons were cast out and the sick were healed. These were signs that the kingdom of God was breaking into the world, offering a new way, a way that is unselfish, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and filled with the fruits of the Spirit.

Repentance is not a one and done, for we find our old nature trying to take back dominion over our lives. Oswald Chambers comments on Jesus asking Saul why he is persecuting Him (Acts 26:14^{xxxviii}). *“Are we determined to serve God in our own way, or in His? Until we undergo the baptism by fire of the Holy Spirit, we will always be tempted to put our own ambitions and interests first. We won’t understand that our self-will and stubbornness stab Jesus, that our insistence on our own dignity and rightness hurts Him. Every time we stand on our right to ourselves and insist that this is what we intend to do, we persecute our Lord.*

When we realize what we’ve been doing, it is the most crushing thing. We see that we’ve been lying, see that every time we went out into the world with the Lord’s name on our lips and selfishness in our hearts, we were persecuting Christ. We were preaching sanctification while exhibiting the spirit of Satan.

Is the Word of God alive and true in me as I hand it on to you, or does my life prove the lie of what I say? That is the question we must ask ourselves. The Spirit of Jesus is conscious of one thing only: a perfect oneness with the Father. All we do should be founded on this oneness, not a prideful determination to “be godly.” “Learn from me,” Jesus said, “for I am gentle and humble in heart” (Mathew 11:29^{xxxix}). If we are gentle and humble. It means that we can be easily taken advantage of, easily snubbed, and easily ignored. But if we submit to this treatment for His sake, we will prevent Jesus Christ being persecuted.”^{xl}

We are so blessed living with so much luxury in the USA that we tend to complain about any discomfort or hardship. Think of what these disciples endured during this trip. God met their basic needs, but all discomfort and rejection was incomparable to the joy of seeing God work through them like He works through their Master. Our attention is often fixed on our self rather than what Jesus has done for us and is doing through us. When our eyes are on our Savior and our goal is to live for Him we can rejoice when rejected or when we suffer loss because we know we are ambassadors of the King of kings. May our gracious Lord help us to live for His glory alone. Then we too can invite people to enter the Kingdom of God.

Questions:

- 1 Why did Jesus send them two by two?
- 2 Why did Jesus send them without bag, extra clothes, food, etc?
- 3 What are the two extremes of receiving from others?
- 4 Was this to continue to be their way of life?
- 5 How does Morgan suggest they preached repentance?
- 6 What did shaking off the dust imply?
- 7 Why do we need to face how sinful we are?
- 8 Review the Chambers’ quote.
- 9 How can we rejoice in hardship?

ⁱ **Acts 1:8 (ESV)**

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

ⁱⁱ **Ecclesiastes 4:9 (NIV)**

⁹ Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work:

ⁱⁱⁱ **Deuteronomy 17:6 (ESV)**

⁶ On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness.

^{iv} **Deuteronomy 19:15 (ESV)**

¹⁵ “A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established.

^v **Numbers 35:30 (ESV)**

³⁰ “If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death on the evidence of witnesses. But no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

^{vi} **Luke 7:18-19 (ESV)**

¹⁸ The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, ¹⁹ calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?”

^{vii} **Acts 13:2-3 (ESV)**

² While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

³ Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

^{viii} **Acts 15:39-41 (ESV)**

³⁹ And there arose a sharp disagreement, so that they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, ⁴⁰ but Paul chose Silas and departed, having been commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹ And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

^{ix} **Acts 19:22 (ESV)**

²² And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

^{x x} R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant and Savior*, vol. 1, Preaching the Word (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1989), 135.

^{xi} **Matthew 10:1 (ESV)**

¹ And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.

^{xii} **Mark 11:23 (ESV)**

²³ Truly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and thrown into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will come to pass, it will be done for him.

^{xiii} **Matthew 12:43-45 (ESV)**

⁴³ “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, but finds none. ⁴⁴ Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when it comes, it finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then it goes and brings with it seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and dwell there, and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So also will it be with this evil generation.”

^{xiv} **James 1:6 (ESV)**

⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.

^{xv} **John 7:39 (ESV)**

³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

^{xvi} **1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (ESV)**

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

^{xvii} **Matthew 7:22-23 (ESV)**

²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in

your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

^{xviii} **Matthew 10:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food.

^{xix} **Mark 9:41 (ESV)**

⁴¹ For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

^{xx} David Guzik, *Mark*, David Guzik’s Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), Mk 6:7–13.

^{xxi} **Philippians 4:16 (ESV)**

¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

^{xxii} **1 Corinthians 4:7 (ESV)**

⁷ For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

^{xxiii} **2 Thessalonians 3:10 (ESV)**

¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

^{xxiv} **John 15:20 (ESV)**

²⁰ Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

^{xxv} **Isaiah 53:12 (ESV)**

¹² Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

^{xxvi} David Guzik, *Mark*, David Guzik’s Commentaries on the Bible (Santa Barbara, CA: David Guzik, 2013), Mk 6:7–13.

^{xxvii} **Matthew 10:7 (ESV)**

⁷ And proclaim as you go, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’

^{xxviii} **Acts 10:36 (ESV)**

³⁶ As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),

^{xxix} **Luke 12:47-48 (ESV)**

⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

^{xxx} **Matthew 3:1-2 (ESV)**

¹ In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ² “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

^{xxxi} **Mark 1:14-15 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God,

¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

^{xxxii} **John 16:8 (ESV)**

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

^{xxxiii} **Romans 6:23 (ESV)**

²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

^{xxxiv} **Romans 5:12 (ESV)**

¹² Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

^{xxxv} **2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)**

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

^{xxxvi} **James 5:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

^{xxxvii} **John 20:21 (ESV)**

²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”

^{xxxviii} **Acts 26:14 (ESV)**

¹⁴ And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

^{xxxix} **Matthew 11:29 (ESV)**

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

^{xl} Chambers, Oswald, *Our Way or His?* January 28 Daily Devotional