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HICKORY GROVE

BAPTIST CHURCH

Following Christ in a Mean World

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Mark 6:7-13

Clint Pressley

⁷ And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 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. 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.” ¹² So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. ¹³ And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

(Pastor prays)

I have a friend who pastors a prominent church in a nearby state. He has just returned from a country where it is illegal to be a Christian. His church has a partnership with an underground ministry in that country to share Christ and to win people to Jesus. His trip was cut short because he was there with one of his partners in the ministry—a national who lives there—and the two of them were walking along the seashore in a populated area with a third man who was with them. As they walked, they had a casual conversation. That conversation turned to Christianity, and the man started asking questions. My

pastor friend and the missionary started sharing Christ. As the conversation went forward and Christ was being shared, the man they were talking to asked if they had something he could read that would tell him about Jesus. They gave him a Bible. But somebody saw it. They saw that Bible had changed hands and a mob started gathering. They started shouting, and the mob turned violent. Thankfully, the police came—and you think you're going to be under protection. The police came and picked them up, my pastor friend and the missionary. They took them away into custody, downtown to the police station. Because he's an American, they didn't hurt him but they made him leave the country immediately. That's why he came home early. His missionary partner is not so lucky. He is still in jail. I talked to my friend this morning. In fact, at about 7:30 this morning, I called and talked to my friend, and he said that missionary partner was still in jail. They've not allowed him to change clothes. They've not allowed him to take a bath, and he's already had one hearing. His wife is telling the pastor about this. In the hearing, they asked him, "Were you proselytizing?"—that's just the question. "Were you proselytizing, sharing the gospel?" He said, "Yes." "Did you give someone a Bible?" He said, "Yes." "Do you know that's illegal to do?" He said, "Yes." They've locked him back up. He's in jail right now. His wife told my pastor friend that he asked for people to pray for him. And what he asked for us to pray I thought remarkable. He didn't ask for safety. He didn't ask for deliverance. He asked us to pray that he would have the courage to stand for the gospel. This is a mean world. Now you and I don't live in a world like that. The world you and I live in is not as mean as that world, but it is slowly slouching in that direction. Part of my obligation of what I'm called to do as a pastor, to the best of my ability, is to make sure that the people within my reach are prepared, made aware, and called to be solid disciples. And I think this passage right here is food for our strength. I think it's here to give us direction. I think, in this passage, you find all the necessary ingredients for solid discipleship.

So let's get the context before we go into the passage. What has happened

already? Jesus and the disciples went to Nazareth, Jesus's hometown, and He was rejected. The disciples were there watching Him be rejected. Verse six is the pivotal verse. We turn from Nazareth, and now Jesus starts His itinerant village ministry preaching.

Somewhere along the way we find out that while He's doing that, He decides for the very first time to send the 12 out without Him to expand the Kingdom. So He, for the first time, sends them out as ambassadors. And what Mark does for us in this passage is give us a description. And as he does, he gives us a sort of template for discipleship, because the truth is...

A Mean World Calls For Solid Disciples

Now here's what I want to do: I want to frame this sermon in the form of five questions and allow these five questions to just serve as sort of pegs in the wall that will guide us. You can just hang some truth on each one of the pegs that guide us through the passage, and hopefully provide some real-time application. Let's start with the first question, number one:

Have You Been With Jesus?

Have you been with Jesus? If you call yourself a Christian, what do you mean by that? When you say that you are a Christian, I don't mean that you like the church, you like the preacher, or that you like gathering with your family on a Sunday. That's not the question. Have you actually been with Jesus? Verse seven tells us that Jesus called the disciples to Himself. You see it right there. In verse seven, He called them to Himself. He's done that before. We see in chapter three, He called them there. What happens when Jesus calls the disciples to Himself? There, He will teach them. They learn what it means to follow Jesus. They see His example, they understand His teaching. For the disciples coming to be with Jesus, it was a tremendous sacrifice. They had to leave lucrative careers like tax collecting, fishing, and the fishing industry. For

most of us, it doesn't mean we have to do that. We don't have to leave our careers. But we are called to come and be with Him, to abide with Him. Have you been with Jesus? Isn't that what Jesus says in John chapter 15? Jesus says in verses four and five to His disciples, *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.* Have you been with Jesus? When you say you're a Christian, what do you mean by that?

When I talk about being with Jesus, here's what I mean. I read something this week, I can't remember where I saw it, but a preacher said that on Sunday morning in church, you should always preach as if there are people there who will hear the gospel for the first time in a way they can understand it. You also need to understand that there are people sitting in this room who may hear the gospel for the last time.

When I say the gospel, what do I mean? Here's what I mean. God has created you in His image. You have dignity. I respect you because the image of God is in you. You are created in the image of God. It's a wonderful thing to be created in the image of God, but that's not the only thing about us, is it? That image of God in us has been messed up. It's disfigured by our sin. It's not just that we are far from God. Our sin is a crime against God and calls for judgment. We stand under condemnation. We don't start with a zero-sum, a blank slate where we'll either be good or bad. We come into this world with a propensity towards sin, and when we're old enough to do it, we sin, and that has separated us from God. It's a crime against God. And this crime against God calls for punishment. That's the reason for the cross. See, the cross is the center of Christianity because Jesus lived perfectly in a way we can't. You are a sinner, you can't be perfect. Jesus—as a human—lived perfectly, and at the cross, what He does is He takes all the wrath of punishment. Look, no matter what your sins are—every one of them—when you come to Christ, He took the

punishment at the cross for you. There He died, and the gospel is that God killed His Son instead of you. Jesus died in the place of sinners. Do you believe that Jesus died for you? So Jesus dies. After He is dead for three days in the grave, God raises Him from the dead. Why does He raise Him from the dead? To show that there is victory over death, to show that He has received the sacrifice of Jesus in your place! Jesus ascends into Heaven. This is what the Bible teaches, that He ascended into Heaven and now rules as Lord. That's presented to you in the form of information. It's the gospel. What do you do with it? You must make it your own. Being with Jesus means you've believed that He did that for you. Have you been with Jesus? I'll start there, but I have to move quickly. Here's the second question, number two:

Do You Live For Jesus?

For the first question, a lot of you answered it in the affirmative in your mind—Yes, I have had a conversion experience. I went through a baptism. I joined the church. I can look back on it. I even remember the preacher who baptized me. So when I said, “Have you been with Jesus?” you said, “Yes.” So here's the second question: Do you live for Jesus? I'll show you where I get that, it's in verse seven. Let's take the rest of the verse. Let me read it, and then let's just make some application in three different ways. Verse seven: *And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.* He called the Twelve and He sent them out. That word in Greek is in the verb form of the word *apostle*—it is *apostolou*. It means *to be an ambassador*. If Jesus is the first one that is sent, God sent Jesus. Then what? Jesus said that as the Father has sent Him, so He is sending them. The apostles are sent out as ambassadors, as representatives.

Let's pause here for a moment and let me talk about apostles. The apostles, the Twelve, they are a unit. They are a specific group of people. Judas was one of the apostles. He was the son of perdition. Paul became an apostle, as one untimely born. An apostle is someone who was an eyewitness, they saw

Jesus. An apostle was somebody who had been with Jesus from His baptism until His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. They were a part of all of that. If you had not seen all of that, you are not an apostle. If you meet someone who says, "I am an apostle," that person needs to be very old. Apostles are gone. We do not have apostolic authority. Paul says that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. The foundation has been laid. You don't keep laying the foundation. That's done. Now, this group of men had authority that we don't have. But we do have the same mission. That mission is a mindset. It's something we have to keep telling ourselves is not an appendage. Your Christianity is not an appendage you put on on Sundays. It's not a crutch that you use when you're hurt or need help. Your Christianity is how you live your life as one who is sent. Maybe you don't feel like you're sent because you are still here. Maybe you don't feel like you are sent out to live as an ambassador. Think of it like this: we gather together in the Kingdom. This outpost is of the Kingdom of God. On Sunday mornings, we gather to worship, to fellowship, to encourage one another, to have our souls fed, and to think of how good it is to be a part of this Kingdom. But we don't stay here. Once worship is done, we leave here as ambassadors sent out to represent the King.

Now when you're coming up in middle school and high school, it's good to sort of have this defense mechanism that says, "It doesn't matter what people think about me. I'm going to do what I know is right." That's a good thing to say. But if you carry that thought too far, you miss being an ambassador because there does come a time when it does matter. Because, if you're an ambassador, what they think of you is what they think of the One you represent, which then should guide our thoughts on every aspect of life—on our recreation, how we have fun; on our demeanor, how we speak with other people; on what we say, our speech; the friends that we're with; and the lifestyle we live. It should guide how we're spending our money. I think one of the ways that we don't think enough about is your presence on social media, *Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter*. What do you project, and how you are

perceived as an ambassador for Christ? He sent them out, it says in verse seven. But notice something else about verse seven. Notice *how* He sent them out. The text says that He sent them out two by two. Why didn't he send them out as individuals and cover more ground? I think there are several reasons why He sends them out two-by-two. I think possibly it could be that, as it says in Deuteronomy 17, on the testimony of two witnesses, a truth is established. Maybe that's why He did it like that. Surely He did it because they need fellowship. It's good to have a companion. Truthfully, you have a picture of accountability: two men, two women walking together, holding one another accountable while they're away from the other group. Certainly, it would be for encouragement, and there's not a person in here who couldn't use a little encouragement. By the way, anytime you see somebody today, you can guarantee they will benefit from having you encourage them.

I woke up this morning at 3:40 AM, not of my own will. My dog started howling at 3:40 AM. Now I normally get up at 4:00 AM on Sunday mornings, but that 20 minutes is very important. The dog got me up, and I went out and let the dog out. At 3:40 AM, he's howling in the yard, so all the neighbors are up now. Speaking of being an ambassador, all the neighbors are up now. I looked at my phone and I had a message from a friend of mine in Ireland, Brian Black. He preached in this pulpit several years ago. He was traveling three hours to preach somewhere and was listening to our services, and he pulled over on the side of the road to send me this message of encouragement. And he just spoke to me such encouraging words that were life-giving on a Sunday morning. Jesus sent them out two-by-two because they would need encouragement. They would need to press one another on to grow. They would need help. A lot of us will use Ecclesiastes chapter four in a wedding ceremony, and it's not wrongly applied, but that's not the only way to apply this passage. When Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes chapter four, he wasn't thinking about a husband and wife. He was thinking about two companions, and this is what he said. Solomon said, *Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up*

his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Jesus sent them out. He sent them out two-by-two.

He sent them out with great confidence. Look at the confidence as Mark said in verse 7. (He) *gave them authority over the unclean spirits*. Now, Jesus gave them apostolic authority. They, as apostles, had authority that we don't have. I want you to look not so much at the apostles, but at the One who had the authority to give. He possesses the authority. In Matthew 28—in the Great Commission—Jesus says that He has authority in Heaven and on earth. Here we see He has authority over evil spirits. It's a good reminder of the One we serve, that He is Lord over all. Jesus Christ is Lord not just in your life. Jesus Christ is Lord completely. Jesus is sovereign so you can live your life with great joy and confidence as you live as one who is sent. We live sent. We live with fellowship. We live with confidence. Have you, then, been with Jesus? Do you live for Jesus? Let's go to a third question. You'll find it in verses 8-10. The third question is...

Are You Dependent on Jesus?

Are you dependent on Jesus? In verses 8-10, Jesus gives some very specific instructions. Let's just read the instructions. I'd like to come back and make three broad-based applications about depending on Jesus. Join me there verse eight: *He charged 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 put on two tunics. And he said to them, 'Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there.* Verse 10 means that when you go into a place—a village—and someone opens their home to you, you stay in that place the whole time.

So what are the principles we can withdraw from this? I'll give you three words.

The first word is *simplicity*. When you read this, you get the idea that Jesus is calling His disciples to travel lightly, to store up minimum provision, and have maximum faith. Most of our struggle is not that today we are in danger of traveling too lightly. Today we are in danger of having too much baggage. He says to them in verses eight and nine that He doesn't want them having any more clothes than what's on their backs. They've got the sandals on their feet. They've got a walking stick in their hands, they've got enough to go. Now, I'm not saying that we need to live like monks or nuns. I'm thankful for luxuries. I'm not looking for air conditioning to be taken away from the church. I do think, however, that if you get so caught up in the things of the world, you miss the call of the mission.

There's another word here that I would use. It's the word *dependence*. He says you're gonna go there without any money in your pocket. I don't want you to take any extra food, no extra clothing. You go there and you're just going to have to trust where God is taking you. He'll provide for you. Let me pause here. What is keeping you from doing the right thing? I mean right now, what is it? What is it that you're afraid of? There won't be enough money? Are you afraid of finances? Are you afraid of the people who see you following Christ? Following Christ means that you are obedient regardless. And in this list of commands that Jesus sort of stacked up in verses 8-10, there is this call for humility. Because the apostles, when they go into another town, God is going to provide, but He's going to use other people to do it. It takes humility. There are a lot of you sitting in this room right now who have the hardest time letting other people help you. And it's pride. That's all it is. It's pride, and it's sinful. Following Christ means trusting God and being dependent on God and the people that God has brought around you. *Simplicity* and *dependence*.

I'll give you a third word. The third word is *contentment*. Just look at it quickly in verse 10. He tells them that when they go into a village and someone opens their home to them, they are to stay in that home. The idea is that you don't get there and start looking for an upgrade, somebody else's house. You get

there and, at first, you don't realize that there are rich people on the other side of town. So you're going to go to the other side of town and stay there. What He's saying is you don't need to think about that. Your job is not living your life to find a better, more comfortable place. There is this call to keep your eyes on the mission, to be content with what God has given you, and then live your life as an ambassador—as one who is sent. Have you then actually been with Jesus? Do you live your life for Jesus? Are you dependent on Jesus? Let me give you a fourth question, then maybe it'll guide us toward the end. Here's the fourth one:

Will You Suffer For Jesus?

Will you suffer for Jesus? Suffer. Verse 11 is Jesus teaching the disciples about rejection. What is it like to be rejected? In verse 11, Jesus gives some very clear instructions on how to handle rejection. He has just shown it to them in Nazareth. Now He gives them instruction, and He takes the practice from Jewish life and gives it a different meaning. Let's read verse 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.* So the idea is when the Jews would walk through Gentile lands and get back home after being in a Gentile land, what they typically would do was shake the dust off their feet as a symbol of cleansing. So Jesus takes that meaning, throws it out, and basically says, "Look, you've been there and you've preached and people rejected you and they won't listen to you, so here's what you do. You do the same thing. You shake the dust off your feet." But it's not you saying that you're done with those people. That's not what this is. This is a testimony. This is a sign of judgment. This is you letting people know how serious following Jesus is. That there's judgment without Christ. There's condemnation without Christ. This is you letting them know how much is really on the line.

When Matthew Henry, a great preacher from another age, talked about this

passage and what Jesus taught here, he said that dust that you shake off your feet becomes like the plagues. The dust that was in Egypt, the Pharaohs, the sign of God's judgment, it's a statement. It's a statement of the consequences of rejecting Christ, of rejecting the free offer of the gospel. Please come to Christ. Please give your life to Jesus. I'll close it with this one last question, number five:

Are You Clear About Jesus?

Are you clear about Jesus? I want to start at the bottom of verse 13 and then I'll go to verse 12. In verse 13, you have a display of apostolic authority that we don't have. Verse 13: *And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil.* You see that right here and over in James, but the anointing with oil is almost always in the Old Testament, and it would be a symbol of God's Spirit. There is healing there. It's good to care. We need to care for people to provide healing. We need to make sure that points to the ultimate healing that is in Christ. But instead of looking at verse 13, I want you to look at the message in verse 12. Verse 12 says, *So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.* That word, *repent*, is the same word that John the Baptist used when he started preaching before Jesus came. Jesus came, and it's the very same word that Jesus used when He preached. Jesus said the very first word of the gospel is *repent*. It's the word that the apostles would use in the book of Acts. It's how the church was born—out of repentance. As I studied for this message, I used lots of books and I read in one of the books, *Christ-Centered Exposition*, a quote from Thomas Watson. Thomas Watson was a preacher in England during the middle 1600s. He was kicked out of his church and started writing books. He wrote a little book about repentance that gives us six ingredients of repentance. So I'm going to go through them quickly. Here's the first one. He says you've got to have *sight of sin to see sin as sin*. It's to recognize that your life is sinful. You have to see it as sin. Maybe it's your lifestyle. Would you today see it as sinful? The next ingredient is *sorrow for sin*. You have to have genuine grief in your heart for the wrong that has been

done, maybe the wrong against someone else or the wrong against God. You have to actually experience the grief and sorrow for sin. The third ingredient is *confession of sin*. When you confess sin, it is you passing judgment on your own sin. Confession is to say the same thing about your sin that God has said about it. The fourth ingredient would be *shame*. This is when we forget to blush, to be ashamed of the sin. Think about the Prodigal Son. Remember the Prodigal Son, when he's off in the far country and there in the pig slop when the Bible says he came to his senses. Jesus says he came to his senses, and when he came to his senses he was ashamed and thought about his speech and he said, "I'm going to tell my father I am no longer worthy to be your son." Shame. That shame should go to the fifth ingredient, which is a *hatred of sin*. You need to actually hate it. The Bible says that God protects us from our enemies, so you should make that sin your enemy, and hate it. And the sixth and final ingredient—the most important, I think—is a *turning away from that sin*. Turning away. When you turn away from something, you turn towards something else. It is the beauty of repentance. You don't just turn away from sin and turn toward an abyss. You turn away from sin and you turn toward the mercy and the love of God, the forgiveness of God, the goodness of God, the grace of God found at the cross. The apostle Paul said that it's the kindness of God that draws us to repentance. That's how I want to end today, calling you to repentance.

Our God waits to receive you by the substitute Jesus. Will you come and give your life to Jesus? Come and receive the atoning work of forgiveness found at the cross of Christ. Our mean world calls for solid disciples, and that starts with the first step of repentance.

(Pastor prays)