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“Mission Ready”

2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10 Mark 6:1-13 2 Corinthians 12:2-10

INTRODUCTION TO 2 SAMUEL 5:1-5, 9-10

This morning we are going to hear about transformation. This first one is this story about David. Up to this point we have heard about his life as the youngest of eight brothers and keeper of the sheep and weekend warrior. This morning we hear of this shepherd boy becoming a king. -- a king that was heralded and welcomed with great celebration...who re-named his hometown Bethlehem after himself.

INTRODUCTION TO MARK 6:1-13

Rabbi Saul of Tarsus was a persecutor of the church, who became one of the greatest promoters of the gospel. That was dramatic reversal that took place as the result of Jesus appearing to him on the road to Damascus. Jesus transitioned from a carpenter to be the King of kings who was heralded and welcomed everywhere BUT his hometown. Hear the word of the Lord from Mark 6:1-6

Let's pray. Lord, thank you for this, your word. Open our eyes to see, our minds to understand, our hearts to receive and our lives to respond to your word through the power of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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“We're on a Mission From God.” Do any of you recognize who made that line famous? The Blues Brothers. When Jake Blues (John Belushi) gets out of prison, he and his brother Elwood decide to reform their band—creatively named The Blues Brothers Band—to raise money for an orphanage. It was a noble pursuit, indeed.

As they travel the country searching for their band mates, they tell people "We're on a mission from God," even though they're leaving an amazing amount of automobile wreckage in their wake after all the high-speed car chases. God clearly works in mysterious ways.

Steven was a young man who felt the call to be on a Mission from God. He came from a really close family. He finished college and then went off to seminary. After finishing seminary he came back home before going to his first church. He visited with all of his relatives for about a week. He stopped by the church and talked to his hometown pastor. The pastor asked him if he would like to preach that upcoming Sunday. Steven felt honored and took the pastor up on the invitation. Sunday morning came and after hours, yes, even days, of preparation he stepped up behind the pulpit, looked out at the congregation of friends and relatives and started to expound the knowledge that he had learned.

Well, he had hardly begun, when his young niece, Kathleen, about six years old,

stepped out into the aisle and put her hands on her hips, her left foot out in front of the other, her head cocked to one side. Then she said in a very loud and clear voice for her age, "Uncle Steven, you don't know what you are talking about!" 1

Steven thought he was Mission Ready, but like Jesus said, a prophet is honored everywhere but his hometown... or as Mark Twain is reported to have said, "An expert is anyone from out of town."

Thomas Wolfe said, "You can't go home again." He said that because he wrote a book about HIS hometown that made his home folks mad! Wolfe grew up in Asheville, North Carolina and he wrote about those years in a novel which he called Look Homeward, Angel. So frank and realistic were his reminiscences that his book was banned from Asheville's public library for over seven years. Today he is a favorite son, but for many years he was an embarrassment to many of the residents of that lovely, southern city.

Jesus was enjoying unparalleled success all around Galilee. Large crowds were coming to hear him teach and to experience his healing power. But that can be draining. Last week we read about a woman being healed by touching the hem of his garment. So, when it was time for a little rest and relaxation Jesus did what many of us do. He headed for home.

When the Sabbath came, Jesus went to the synagogue and began to teach and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get this knowledge?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him that he even does miracles? Isn't this the carpenter? They even took inventory of his at least six of his siblings. Did you notice as I read that Jesus was one of at least 7 children? Mark doesn't give us the names of the sisters, but the fact that he says sisters means there had to be at least 2. The people of Jesus home town asked, "Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" Jesus had a brother named Judas?

How would you like to have followed Jesus in school? How would you liked to have grown up hearing your teachers ask, "Why can't you be more like your brother Jesus? Straight A+'s. Perfect Attendance. In fact, perfect everything!

Jesus was an enigma to his hometown, but he was an embarrassment to some members of his own family. Earlier in Mark's Gospel in chapter 3:20-21 we read these mystifying words, "Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'"

Think your family doesn't appreciate you? You are not alone. Jesus' own family thought he was out of his mind! Maybe you don't feel appreciated. Maybe you don't feel appreciated at home. Maybe people there don't treat you with much respect. Or, maybe it's at work, or maybe even sometimes at church.

R E S P E C T was one of Aretha Franklin's biggest hits. (She sang that song in the Blues Brothers movie.) Respect. It's what comedian Rodney Dangerfield made a career out of not getting. His bug eyed, collar pulling, deprecating humor made him star of comedy clubs and the movie Caddy Shack. Rodney's trademark line was, "I tell ya, I don't get no respect. (Well "Caddy Shack" wasn't exactly "Ben Hur.")"

In his sermon at the hometown synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus preached to the hometown folks -- family and friends and not only did he not get R E S P E C T. He got R E J E C T...E D. In response Jesus said, "Only in his hometown among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor. Jesus was a failure in his hometown. He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of faith."

Jesus saw his rejection as a sign of what was to come -- his suffering and death. He knew his days were numbered. When he was gone, others would have to carry on the work of salvation by offering healing and preaching the gospel. Not only could a shepherd like David become a king and persecutor like Saul become an apostle and a carpenter like Jesus become a King of kings, but also fishermen could become missionaries. Hear Mark 6:7-13 where Jesus prepares them to be sent to everyone ELSE'S hometown-- to get Mission Ready.

After Jesus' hometown rejection, Jesus began to put in motion the next stage of his ministry, sending out the disciples two by two. He decided to E J E C T them from his shadow and send them forth two by two to do what he had been doing: to heal the sick, and preach about repentance and forgiveness.

We need one another to do the work we are called to do. Jesus' plan was that his followers should go out together in pairs. Why go together? Couldn't more territory be covered if they went out alone? Yes, but they were sent two by two because the gospel involves community. In fact, the reality is that those to whom we go need to welcome us, because in welcoming us they are opening their lives to the possibilities that God brings through us.

That's why Jesus told them to not take a money bag or luggage, any food, or any money. They were to "leave home without IT". They would have to depend on the hospitality of strangers to whom they were sent. They would have to depend on what even Jesus couldn't get in his hometown—a warm welcome.

Are you willing to receive folks into your circle of friends and show them the hospitality that Jesus expected his disciples to receive as they went on their first journey 2x2? Are you willing to pair off and GO to those who need to have their "diseases healed, their spirit's cleansed and their souls saved?"

A father was talking with his rather rebellious son one day and said, "Every person who lives in the United States is a privileged person."

The boy answered, "I disagree." And the father replied, "That's the privilege."

One of our greatest freedoms is the freedom to disagree, to disagree with the way things are being done in our government, with the way things are being done in the church, and even to disagree with Dad!

While as citizens of this nation we do have a freedom to disagree, as citizens of God's kingdom we experience real freedom when we AGREE with the Lord. As followers of Jesus, every day we make a declaration that we are dependent on each other... and on our Lord for mercy and grace and strength and inspiration and courage to be ...Dependent..

When I was on vacation I saw Thomas Jefferson's writing desk on which he composed the Declaration of Independence. **SHOW SLIDE.**

The fifty-six men who signed it publicly declared their commitment to the "self-evident truths" that formed the foundation of our nation and which have continued to serve as a beacon of hope for all people around the world who have ever yearned to be free.

The final sentence of the Declaration of Independence is a promise among the signers, to "mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our Sacred Honor," and many of them and their fellow patriots did in fact sacrifice their lives and fortunes in service to our country.

We are a part of a church that exists today because those first disciples put all they had on the line. They were citizens of a kingdom whose purpose was to AGREE with God. They went forth and preached and healed because they were D E P E N D E N T on God. They not only went out 2 x 2, but they died 1 x 1 for their faith for which THEY received an eternal arms wide open welcome.

Are you willing to receive folks into your circle of friends and show them the hospitality that Jesus expected his disciples to receive as they went on their first Mission From God? Are you willing to pair off and GO to those who need to have their "diseases healed, their spirit's cleansed and their souls saved? Are you Mission Ready?

I want to close with another story about a preacher named Peter Bingle. Unlike Steven this preacher didn't have a six year old niece in his audience.

On September 20, 1989, in Pretoria, South Africa, F. W. de Klerk was inaugurated as President of the country. Apartheid, the legal segregation of the races, was the law of the land. Mr. de Klerk was a Christian who attended church regularly, so he invited his favorite pastor, the Rev. Peter Bingle, to lead a worship service as part of the inaugural events.

During the sermon, Pastor Bingle said this: Mr. de Klerk, as our new President, God is calling you to do his will. Today God calls you to serve as the President of South Africa. God's commission is not to serve as the President of some people, but as the President of all the people of South Africa.

By the benediction, de Klerk was weeping. He called his family and friends together and said, "Pray for me. God has told me what I must do. And if I do it, I will be rejected by my own people. Pray for me, that I might do the will of God."

Soon thereafter, de Klerk took steps to release Nelson Mandela from prison. Then he began to negotiate with the African National Congress. Then he worked to dismantle the system of apartheid. 2

Are we Mission Ready? Are we on a Mission from God? Are we ready to go forth to share the good news that anyone, no matter from what country they hail, has the potential to be welcomed. May we go forth to share the good news that anyone, no matter where they call home, has the potential at the end of their lives to receive from Jesus what Jesus could not get in his home town...what his disciples did not always get, what the founders of our nation gave up to start a new nation, what Mr. de Clerk did to bring justice to the nation he was elected to serve: what prophets get everywhere else but their hometown—a welcome.

Let's pray. Lord, when we are rejected remind us that you experienced it as well. Don't let fear of rejection keep us from carrying out the mission you have entrusted to us. Help us to capture the sense of enthusiasm and joy which the disciples felt as they stepped out onto their mission field! Fill us with that kind of boldness, that kind of sharing, that kind of stretching to serve Jesus that really shakes us up! Inspire us with the same kind of boldness and zeal and risk-taking which was so contagious in the early community of faith. Do not allow us to act as if we are immunized against the effects of the Spirit! Fortify us with your power. Bring into our prayers a sense of honesty and seriousness, depth and enthusiasm.

Lord, pour out your great grace upon us as you have promised, for we are ready to be bold for the sake of the kingdom which is above all kingdoms above all governments above all nations of this world.

1 **Christianglobe Illustrations**, by King Duncan

2 **A Tough Crowd**, by Monte Paul Marshall