

32 Mark 6:7-12

God's Plan for Domination

Text

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.

Introduction

During the 7 year war in 1759 the French planned to invade Scotland. Conflans, was trying to slip past a British blockade. "During the first week of November, a westerly gale came up, and after three days, the ships of Hawke's blockade were forced to run for Torbay on the south coast of England. In the meantime, a small squadron from the West Indies joined Conflans in Brest, and when an easterly wind came on the 14th, Conflans slipped out. But Hawke was already returning from Torbay, got the reports of Conflans's sailing, and went in pursuit. Hawke caught up with Conflans at dawn on the 20th, just as Conflans was about to enter the treacherous waters of Quiberon Bay."1

A powerful storm was approaching and Conflans took refuge in the bay of Quiberon. Joseph Cummins records the rest of the story as follows:

So intent was Hawke to catch and destroy his enemies...that he directed his ships to sail directly into Quiberon in hot pursuit of the French. Many of his officers were aghast when they received this order - Battles did not take place in gale force winds if at all possible - but they could do nothing but obey. It was obvious that Hawke would have no second thoughts, not even for an instant...The 74 gun Magnanime lead the way followed by Hawke in the Royal George. He told his officers to set their top gallant sails - a risky maneuver in high winds as these top sails might, caught in a powerful gust of wind, tip the ship over. When that didn't put on enough speed for him he set his side sails. In those days, the side-sails of a vessel were used only when the wind was extremely light, in order to catch the faintest breeze. To use them in the midst of a storm was akin to turning on the afterburners on a rocket - they thrust the Royal George along at enormous speed. Hawke's men followed in other ships, terrified. With their gun-ports open and ready to do battle, any water pouring in could easily capsize the vessel and send them quickly to the bottom of the ocean.

Conflans watched in amazement as Hawke's ships entered the bay. Because of the

aggressively pursued the French, Conflans did not have time to bring his ships into a line of battle. Before he knew it the British ships were among his fleet blasting away. 2

A Commission Received

And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

It is strange to see Jesus commission these men at this point in their understanding.

The going in two is a well attested biblical scenario. The communion, accountability and mutual strengthening are missing in a single missionary, single pastor model.

The mission they are sent on is not a new mission. They are not beginning their own mission.

They are continuing his mission. This is good for us to realize. It keeps our nose in the Book. If we think of it as our own we will go off into all kinds of hair-brained ideas and movements. But continuing his mission we will always return to the book and ask, "now what?" "What should I do now Lord?" "How should I do it Lord?"

The disciples have just been given their first mission. They were to proclaim the kingdom of God. They were to proclaim the gospel of God. They were to command repentance from sins. And they were given authority in their speaking. Their authority was derived, Christ's was inherent.

We also have received a commission. Like the disciples we have been commanded to proclaim the gospel of God. We do not have the authority to speak on behalf of God in a binding revelatory way, so we have not been invested with miraculous powers to authenticate. However, we still must proclaim the gospel! When we speak it does not become part of Scripture; that is another level of authority all-together, never-the-less we do have authority to proclaim what is in this book - and we have the command to proclaim what is in this book.

We are the watchman on the tower. We have been entrusted with the lives of our fellow man. If we see the enemy drawing near, if we see destruction coming our way and we do not sound the trumpet of warning then we are held guilty of the blood that is shed! Ours is no small role. We have a vital role to play here. Who would dare charge that the job of a watchman is unimportant? Ezekiel 33:6 states

But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any one of them, that person is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.

This is no unimportant task!

The Place in Redemptive History

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.

This passage has been used in some interesting ways. Some groups have used this passage to support some kind of ascetic lifestyle. I once picked up a hitchhiker who was following this command exactly. No money, no extra clothes. He would travel from place to place and stay

wherever he was welcomed. He had no job, and no home. It was an admirable but misplaced commitment to this text. I want us to see it in its broader context - in its redemptive historical context.

As we look at this text we may wonder a bit at it. We should anyway. Last week we spoke about removing the familiar and thoughtfully anticipating the profound, let us begin to practice that. We may have read or at least heard this text many times. It is familiar to us. It may not particularly stand out to us the way David and Goliath does, but still it is familiar. But let us take a fresh approach this morning. Let us breathe not the stifling air of familiarity but the fresh air of God breathed revelation.

At first we may wonder why this was included at all? Why did Mark preserve this for us? And as we contemplate that we may begin to wonder why Jesus even said it in the first place? What an odd command. And what an odd detail to preserve for us.

Why did the Holy Spirit inspire, and why did God providentially decree that his servants would die for texts like this which tell us about their clothes? Among the items that they were to take is a tunic, a belt, sandals, and a staff. Now turn with me to the book of Exodus.

Exodus 12:11 In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. Here these 12 disciples, mirroring the 12 tribes of Israel, are dressed and equipped in the same way the tribes were commanded before the passover and the exodus. These themes should now be familiar to you. The exodus language of Isaiah and Malachi used in Mark's prologue announced the coming of Jesus. You may recall that as God had called and constituted the 12 tribes of Israel on a mountain, so Jesus calls his twelve disciples on the mountain. There was an anticipation of a second exodus of God's people. The next exodus, however, would not be a geopolitical exodus, but an exodus from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God. A redemption, not from physical slavery, but from our slavery to sin. This exodus, this redemption coming after the passover, after the sacrifice of the lamb.

We have been commissioned, and this is the nature of our proclamation. There is a God who is holy. We are sinful. N.T. Wright is correct in emphasizing the fact that the gospel proclamation was an announcement of a king. We looked at this at the beginning of Mark. This gospel was announcing the enthronement of a king. But Wright does not go far enough.

Imagine if you will a sovereign who rules a certain country. He has been gone abroad for a time. He is hated by all of his people. Imagine another person who is universally despised. People hate him. He is the object of scorn and ridicule! He is mocked, beaten, cheated, and laughed at constantly. Further suppose that he is completely innocent of any wrongdoing. All of the hatred and malice has been completely one sided. Further suppose that it is discovered that this person is the son of the king and has just ascended the throne as king himself. His entire life he has endured the dishonoring of himself and his father by the lips of these ungrateful people. He now comes to power and he has all power and all authority. Is this good news for the people?! No! This is bad news!

There is a holy God, we are sinful, he is angry. We have for centuries mocked him and rebelled against him. We have thumbed our noses at him. For centuries he has endured this treatment from mankind. The long awaited arrival of this holy King has now come. Pray tell how is this good news?! If that is where we leave it then it is very much bad news! There must be a way out! There is! There is a way out. There is a rout through which we can make our exodus! The disciples had to proclaim it and so must we proclaim it!

This is redemption from sin! This is reconciliation with God. This is the path to the promised land. It is our because someone has shared it with us, shall we now keep this message to ourselves? What kind of a person does this? Hollywood capitalizes on this all the time. If this is how Hollywood portrays the bad guys, you know it must be bad. Two people working together to get out of a tight spot and one of them makes it just to cut the rope or burn the bridge or pull up the ladder or refuse to throw the life preserve back or in some way remove the way of escape. This is exactly what happens if we refuse to share the gospel. We are withholding from people the only means of salvation.

Responsibility Reassigned

We move now from the commission received and from where we find it in redemptive history to a responsibility reassigned.

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."

As a watchman the task is ours to sound a warning. Once that warning has been given, then the blood of the people is on their own heads. It is not our responsibility to save them. If not a single person ever repents, that is not our concern. But it is our responsibility to share the gospel with them. But if, when you share the gospel, there is no reception of it, then you have done your part and the guilt is on their heads.

James Edwards notes that this shaking the dust off one's feet was, "a searing indictment since Jews traveling outside of Palestine were required to were required to shake themselves free of dust when returning home lest they pollute the promised land. This command is tantamount to declaring a Jewish village heathen." Ethnicity will not secure one's place among God's people in this second exodus. Even towns in the promised land will be declared as heathen if they reject the promised One!

Let me now turn the tables once again. If being born a Jew, and living in the promised land, and having been circumcised is not enough for them, then what about us? As always, I am aware that we can all give right answers, but I want to go deeper.

Jesus Christ is the goal of our existence. He is the preeminent one. He is the only thing that matters. Away with your pedigree, your accomplishments, your money your status. Away with your ethnicity and your rites. Away with your boasting in circumcision, family life, church attendance, Sabbath observance, charitable giving, feast attendance; away with it all if you have not Jesus Christ. Reject this man, reject this message and there is no hope for you. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for those who reject the Son of God.

I will not take the time now to expand these too far, but I want you to consider the following verses and the high standard that is set for God being our all in all.

Colossians 1:11 May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy.

1 Thess 1:6 And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,

Heb 10:34 For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the

plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one.

Heb 12:2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

James 1:2 Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, 3 for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. 4 And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

From Edict to Execution

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.

Finally we see here what the disciples did. They received this commission from Christ and then they put it into action. We can fault them for a good many things, but at least they did. They certainly had cause to draw back from this command because part of the description of what they should do entailed what they should do when rejected. Jesus was anticipating that people and even entire towns and villages would reject the disciples, their message and the Christ they proclaimed. I love the realism of scripture. Let us not enter into ministry with any false expectations. But knowing that rejection would come, still they obeyed.

There are certain gaps that exist in evangelicalism. One of these gaps, that has become somewhat of a chasm in our day, is this separation of edict and execution. It is a separation of decree and deed. Although it is quite wide in some spots, at other spots that gap is almost imperceptible. Speaking on a large scale here this gap widens and narrows at certain points. Why is that? Theologians have classed sins into two different categories: sins of commission, and sins of omission. I believe that at least part of gap phenomena can be explained by reference to this classification.

Sins of commission are those activities that are forbidden which we actively commit. Murder, adultery, and theft are all sins of commission. Sins of omission are those deeds which we are commanded to do that we refuse to act on. It seems to me that this gap between what God has said and our subsequent behavior is narrow when we speak of sins of commission, but it is vast when we speak of sins of omission.

Our kids are studying the middle-ages right now and one of the stories we just read about are a group of kings called the "Do Nothing Kings." Their lives revolved around entertainment and they accomplished absolutely nothing of lasting import. We are a do nothing people here in America. We don't actively do anything. So sure sins of commission are not our problem, we can avoid murder because that is work, that is doing something. But look at the things which we are commanded to do and the gap is vast. We will affirm the right but we fall short of complete obedience.

Let us begin to sew up these gaps between edict and execution. Let us live out this strange plan of God for conquering the kingdom of darkness.

1) Wikipedia, Battle of Quiberon Bay; Available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Quiberon_Bay; Accessed 9/6/08.

2) Joseph Cummins, Turn Around and Run Like Hell: Amazing Stories of Unconventional Military Strategies That Worked (Murdoch Books, November 15, 2007), 93.