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Andrew M. Davis Sermon

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The Training of the Twelve

Mark 6:7-13

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Clay is one of the most common substances on the surface of the earth. In its natural form it is close to worthless. But in the hands of a skillful potter, a master artisan, it can take shape and grow and develop into a masterpiece worth tens of thousands of dollars.

One of the greatest potters in the last hundred years was a Japanese craftsman named Shoji Hamada. He specialized in ceramics used in the traditional Japanese tea ceremony, and a simple but elegant tea pot crafted by his skillful hands has sold as high as \$5000.

Perhaps you have seen a master potter at work at his wheel... spinning the wheel with his feet, throwing the wet clay on the center and applying his skillful hands to the lump. It rises as if being raised from the dead from an amorphous lump to a certain specified height. As the craftsman continues to apply moisture and skillful pressure, a delicate vessel appears before your eyes.

This process has been used for millennia of human history, and the analogy between God's working on his people and the potter's craftsmanship with clay is ancient as well. Jeremiah the prophet was taught by God through this kind of a living parable:

Jeremiah 18:1-6 This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

² "Go down to the potter's house, and there I will give you my message." ³ So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him

working at the wheel. ⁴ But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him. ⁵ Then the word of the LORD came to me: ⁶ "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?" declares the LORD. "Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

So it was with the Twelve Apostles in the hands of the Master, Jesus Christ. They were just wet clay until he shaped them to be the leaders of the church, those whose lives and doctrines would change the history of the world.

Today, we will see another major step in the Training of the Twelve, as Jesus sends them out on their own for the first time to do ministry. This was their first solo flight... a major part of their apprenticeship. And it offers timeless lessons to all of us who carry on their evangelistic work in our own generation.

For we are all called to this work... we are called to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, and teaching them to obey all of Jesus' commandments.

Like the Twelve, we need to be shaped and molded and prepared to do this work.

Like all of them, at some point we can feel overwhelmed by the work and feel completely inadequate for it. The Apostle Paul said it well:

2 Corinthians 2:15-16 For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. ¹⁶ To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?

But in the hands of the Master Potter, we can be shaped and prepared and used to be instruments for the salvation of the people of our generation.

This is Christ's strategy for reaching the world.

I. Christ's Strategy to Reach the World

A. Jesus Had a Limited Role in Reaching this Lost World

Matthew 15:24 "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."

B. But He Knew That God Intended to Reach the Entire World

Isaiah 49:6 "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

C. To That End... Jesus Always Intended to Call, Train, and Send Out His Followers to Win the World

D. This Passage Represents a Major Turning Point in the Ministry of Jesus

1. Up till this point in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus has been doing everything himself
2. He has done all the healing, all the driving out of demons, all the teaching
3. He has stood in the gap alone with no one joining in, because they were not ready
4. But now the time has come to prepare the Twelve for the role they will play for the rest of their lives

E. This Was Always His Intention

Mark 1:16-17 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

F. The Cycle of Parables in Mark 4 Got Them Ready for This Work

1. The parable of the Seed and the Soils was fundamentally about evangelism

2. The statement about no one lighting a lamp and putting it under a bowl or a bed represented his commitment to let the light of his teaching shine throughout the world
 3. The statement about the farmer planting a seed and it growing all by itself without him doing anything to make it grow was about evangelism... that only God can save a soul
 4. So also the parable of the Mustard Seed... getting them ready for the growth of the Kingdom of God from something small and unimpressive to something stunning and massive... that was about evangelism
 5. Now, he wants to get them ready for their role in scattering the seed of the gospel everywhere
- G. His Handling of the Twelve is a Timeless Paradigm for Every Generation that Followed... with some key exceptions
1. Everyone of Jesus' true disciples has a role to play in the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth and to the end of time

Matthew 12:30 "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

We will either GATHER WITH Jesus or we will scatter... there is no middle ground; and he is GATHERING his sheep into his fold; he is GATHERING the wheat into the barn...

He is doing this through evangelism; and if we are not active in winning the lost, we are SCATTERING

His training of the Twelve is essential to every generation that would follow... with some key exceptions:

2. The Apostles were unique compared to the centuries of followers that would take up the mantle of world evangelization in that...
 - a. They were EYEWITNESSES of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection... we aren't

- b. Their EYEWITNESS testimony would be the foundation of the entire New Testament, and on their eyewitness testimony the faith of all succeeding generations would rest; we've NEVER SEEN JESUS!
 - c. Their AUTHORITATIVE TEACHING would shape the doctrine of the church for all succeeding generations; they would have the power to bind and loose—to make authoritative doctrinal statements that everyone that followed must adhere to; we do not have that role!
 - d. Furthermore, they were given SUPERNATURAL POWER to drive out demons and heal every disease and sickness among the people... these signs were to mark apostles as different, even in their own generation
 - e. None of these things are true of us... we are not the TWELVE... we are not the foundation of the church of Jesus Christ (according to Ephesians 2)
 - f. BUT there are some common aspects to the lives and ministries of the Twelve Apostles, and on these we will focus for this sermon
3. In their general calling to preach the gospel and win lost people to faith in Christ, and to warn those who reject of the grave danger of rejection... the calling to show compassion to the hurting and suffering of the world, the calling to live holy lives above reproach and be willing to suffer for the gospel... these things are TIMELESS EXAMPLES for every generation

II. Timeless Lessons on Evangelism from the Twelve

A. Prepared by Jesus

Mark 6:7 Calling the Twelve to him...

- 1. Before Jesus could send them out, he had to prepare them first
- 2. Fundamentally, all mission flows from a relationship with Christ
- 3. One of the basic, practical job descriptions of the Twelve was to be with Jesus

Mark 3:14 He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

4. Jesus will state it even more emphatically the night before his death

John 15:5 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.

5. So, everything they will do in their mission, they will do because they first saw him do it; everything they will teach in their mission, they will teach because they first heard him teach it

6. Stages of their preparation

a. Initial faith in Christ

John 1:35-37 The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. ³⁶ When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" ³⁷ When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus.

b. Sacrificial following

Mark 1:16-20 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

c. General training (given to the crowds)

i) Hearing Jesus' words day after day

ii) Observing Jesus' miracles day after day

iii) Seeing the glory of Christ—his character, his love, his demeanor, his holiness

d. Identification of the Twelve

- i) Already mentioned...
 - ii) Jesus went up on a mountain and spent all night in prayer
 - iii) Afterward, he called all his disciples to him and chose the Twelve, designating them to be Apostles (Mark 3)
 - iv) BUT the term “apostles” literally means “sent ones”
 - v) He gave them this title before he ever sent them out anywhere...
- e. Specialized training
- i) Focused more and more on the inner circle
 - ii) Especially Peter, James, and John... but all Twelve got specialized instructions—especially the explanation of the parables

Mark 4:34 He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

- f. Practical apprenticeship (this trial mission)
- i) You can’t learn evangelism by word only
 - ii) You have to go out and try it... do it
 - iii) Jesus wanted them to get practical experience on their own
- g. Final commissioning (after his resurrection)
- i) The Great Commission
 - ii) Mark’s version

Mark 16:15-16 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

- h. Empowerment by the Spirit

Acts 1:8 You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth

7. So... step by step, like a master craftsman, Jesus got the twelve ready for their responsibilities
8. Jesus PREPARED THEM before he SENT THEM
9. But then... he sent them out

B. Sent Out by Jesus

Mark 6:7 Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out...

1. Going back now into Mark 6, this was the first time Jesus sent them out physically
2. This is essential to Jesus' plan for the world
3. The world will not come to the gospel; the gospel has to go out into the world
4. We will not reach Durham by hoping Durham will come to us
5. We have to go out to them
6. Furthermore, as I just said, evangelistic training has to include active ministry... going out and trying it
7. They would be on their own, as they would be after Jesus ascended into heaven
8. So, Jesus sent them out for a apprenticeship
9. If FBC wants to win the lost of our region, we have to be prepared for some real life practical training

C. Preaching the Gospel

1. Ok, I realize that this is not mentioned at all in Mark 6 per se
2. I think that just shows the division of labor the Holy Spirit intended for the various Gospels

3. Matthew 10 and Luke 9 also record the more extensive instructions Jesus gave to his apostles upon sending them out
4. So, while it is clear that they were sent out to preach the gospel, it does not say so here
5. But it clearly says it in Mark 16:15-16

Mark 16:15-16 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

6. This was a preaching for the purpose of saving lost people from their sins
7. That is the GOOD NEWS of the gospel... that sinners can be forgiven and reconciled to God by faith, by repenting of their sins and believing the gospel... as Jesus himself did in his own preaching day after day

Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

8. And essential to that good news is the forgiveness of sins

Mark 2:5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

The healing of the paralytic was done to teach one central lesson essential to the WONDERFUL GOOD NEWS:

Mark 2:10-12 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...." He said to the paralytic, ¹¹ "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.

9. The disciples were sent out to preach the good news of forgiveness of sins
10. Of course, it would not be until after Christ's atoning death and bodily resurrection that the fullness of the gospel message could be proclaimed, as the Apostle Paul would make very plain:

1 Corinthians 2:2 I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,

11. At this point, the Twelve are not prepared to preach that message... the very basis for the forgiveness for our sins; but they are being groomed for it

12. They are sent out to preach GOOD NEWS... joyful news

Isaiah 52:7 How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation

D. Calling for Repentance

Mark 6:12 They went out and preached that people should repent.

1. Essential to the good news is the BAD NEWS... we have all sinned and stand under the judgement of God
2. John the Baptist preached this call for repentance
3. Jesus Christ preached this call for repentance
4. So the Twelve Apostles preached the same message; this was the very thing that enraged so many people, the bad news that they are sinners who will be condemned to hell if they don't repent
5. But these Twelve did not go out to tickle people's ears or flatter them with compliments... they went out to tell them to flee the wrath to come, to stop rebelling against God's Kingdom by their sins

E. Paired Up

Mark 6:7 Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two

1. There is such wisdom to this...

2. It is hard to evangelize, especially if you are boldly telling people to repent
3. To have the fellowship of a partner who is sharing the hardships with you is essential; without it, we can easily be overwhelmed by discouragement
4. Also there is the matter of testimony and truthfulness

2 Corinthians 13:1 "Every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

F. Power to Heal

Mark 6:7 he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.

Matthew gives the fuller account:

Matthew 10:1 He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.

This is corroborated by our account here:

Mark 6:13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

1. Jesus is conferring on the Apostles supernatural power, similar to his own
2. These miraculous powers established the authority of the Apostles to preach the word... and it also established their authority over demons to rescue lost people from Satan's kingdom
3. Evangelism is fundamentally a rescue effort from Satan's kingdom of darkness and sin and death
4. The Apostles carried with them the authority of Jesus Christ over demons to set prisoners free
5. The healings also gave them a link to Jesus' heart of compassion for suffering sinners

6. Though the present-day church cannot do apostolic healing ministry in the same way they did, Christians have been able to display amazing compassion for suffering people... in drought, famine, pandemics, war zones, earthquakes... the church is there ministering to sad and hurting people
7. Finally, the miraculous healings done by Jesus and the Apostles are a display of the general HEALING ministry that the gospel does... healing from SIN

Luke 5:31-32 "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

G. Purity from Possessions

Mark 6:8-10 These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff-- no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. ⁹ Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. ¹⁰ Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town."

1. Jesus calls them to RADICAL TRUST... relying on God to meet their needs
 - a. We tend to be anxious about our bodies and our stomachs
 - b. These apostles were sent out in a radical display of trust in God to meet all their needs
 - c. No extra equipment, no backpacks of food, no extra clothing... just radical faith in God to take care of them
2. He also calls them to SIMPLICITY... freedom from materialism
 - a. It would have been very easy for them to make tons of money doing these healings
 - b. But Jesus commanded them plainly not to take money for these healings

Matthew 10:8 Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.

c. In this simple lifestyle, they were modeling heavenly-mindedness, freedom from greed, simplicity

3. Unlike false teachers who are always in it for the money

2 Corinthians 2:17 Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God

4. The “one house” rule is so they don’t insult their first host by finding a better home for the second week they’re in a town

5. Any home that will feed you and put you up for the night is GOOD ENOUGH... and if they do, they will never lose their reward

6. QUESTION: Is Jesus calling on the messengers of the gospel to lives of permanent poverty? Many monastic orders in the middle ages took it that way, and those monks spent their whole lives begging for their bread

The IMB sends out teams to cities making commitments to care for their every need, including housing, automobiles, excellent medical coverage... the average annual cost of an IMB missionary is \$60,000 for a single, \$120,000 for a couple.

But what about all Christians? Are these permanent calls to radical poverty in reliance on God?

No... decidedly not! This was just a BOOT CAMP in radical faith

By the end of his life, Jesus gave very different instructions:

Luke 22:35-36 Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered. ³⁶ He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.

So, while the lasting principles of a simple lifestyle, and heavenly-mindedness, and Christian contentment, and not doing ministry to get rich... all of those are permanent, Jesus is not calling all evangelists and ministers of the gospel to radical poverty

H. Power to Warn

Mark 6:11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.

1. If the people reject the message, you don't need to stay and take a beating
2. If they are becoming hostile, rejecting, insulting, getting aggressive... then LEAVE! But as you do, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony to them
3. This was a common gesture by pious and nationalistic Jews that had traveled to a pagan land; when they crossed the borders of the pagan land and returned back to the Promised Land, they would do this very thing—shake the dust from that pagan, godless land from their sandals and even from their garments as if to say “All the godlessness of that land does not cling to me... I am free from the judgments of God that they will ultimately receive for their sins!”
4. But here, Jesus was telling his Jewish apostles to do that very thing to other Jews who were rejecting their message of the gospel... they were saying “You are no better than pagans! God’s judgment is upon you for rejecting this gospel!”
5. More plainly:

Matthew 10:15 I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

6. For us... we need to realize part of the ministry of the gospel is to warn people that rejection of this message will have dire and eternal consequences
7. Jesus will say it plainly:

Mark 16:15-16 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶ Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Condemned = under God’s eternal wrath!!

I. Obedience Leading to Fruitfulness

1. The disciples obey and God blessed with amazing results

Mark 6:13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

2. We don't have full records of their works here... but later in the Book of Acts, we will see more and more people repenting of their sins and trusting in the gospel for eternal life

J. Accountability

1. Jesus is the one who sends us
2. To him we will be finally accountable

Mark 6:30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught.

On Judgment Day, we will give to Christ an account of everything we have done with this gospel message!!

This passage teaches us how to be faithful: Ten timeless lessons on evangelism

Let's translate them to ourselves

III. The Lessons Translated to Us

- A. Prepared by Jesus
- B. Sent Out by Jesus
- C. Preaching the Gospel
- D. Calling for Repentance
- E. Paired Up
- F. Power to Heal
- G. Purity from Possessions
- H. Power to Warn

I. Obedience Leading to Fruitfulness

J. Accountability

First, recognize that, if you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, he is calling you first to himself... not to evangelism. You don't have to evangelize to prove yourself or make yourself acceptable to him so you can earn heaven. Come to Christ in a faith relationship and feel his love for you. Abide in him, rest in him, love him, feel his power and presence in your life by the power of the Holy Spirit. Then, let him work on you, train you, prepare you to go out in his name.

Second, ask Christ to send you out in his name to win lost people. Understand that you must be active in gathering the scattered sinners of the world or you are scattering yourself. Ask him to use you; like Isaiah of old, say "Here am I... send me!"

Third, when you go to lost people, preach the timeless unchanging gospel – the good news of forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ's name... through faith in the blood of the cross and the emptiness of his tomb. The clear proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God for salvation.

Fourth, be bold to call people to repent of their sins. Use the law of God... the Ten Commandments... to show them their sins; to convict them of their guilt before God. Do not fear man, but help people fear God.

Fifth, don't be a Lone Ranger evangelist. Find a partner or a team of people to do evangelism with and hold each other accountable. Lean on each other. Pray for each other. Go with each other. Let's do this together as a church!

Sixth, find ways to show compassion for suffering people. There will always be poor people, sick people, suffering people, dying people. People who are successful and healthy and wealthy and satisfied don't think they need a Savior. Go to where people are hurting, suffering, weak, mourning... show the compassion of Christ.

Seventh, watch out for materialism and greed. It is not likely that you will be tempted to get rich doing ministry; but it is more likely that the pursuit of a comfortable materialistic life is the single greatest hindrance to the members of FBC doing outreach. Ask God to show you patterns of materialism and greed and lust for pleasure and comfort in your life that are hindering you from evangelizing as you should.

Eighth, tell people the truth about hell. Warn them not to reject this message. But if they do become abusive, move on. Mentally (if not literally) shake the dust from your feet. Understand they are abusive only because you made them feel guilty... their real problem is with God.

Ninth, obey... move out... trust God! ACT! And see God make you fruitful.

Tenth, realize someday you will give Christ an account for everything you have done in the body, good or bad. Part of that account will be telling Christ what you did with every gospel opportunity you ever had.

First Baptist Church... LET'S BE FAITHFUL!!!