

Separated and Sent to Serve

Mark 6: 7-13

Today we come to what must have been an exciting and yet anxious time in the life of the disciples. They have been walking with Jesus for some time now, watching and learning from Him. While they have experienced much in their time with the Lord, Jesus had primarily done all the work. This will be their first real opportunity for service. They have served as apprentices up to this point, and the time has come for them to step out in ministry.

As we have discussed previously, this was a very diverse group. Fortune 500 companies today would be looking for different qualifications than what the majority of these men possessed. They had not been formally trained in universities or seminaries. For the most part they were common, ordinary men that Jesus would use in extraordinary ways.

Our text provides encouragement and guidance for those who desire to serve the Lord today. While our culture and environment is much different, the aspects of service revealed are timeless. Hopefully we will be enlightened and better equipped to serve the Lord by considering the passage before us. I want to examine the [aspects](#) of service as we consider the thought: [Separated and Sent to Serve](#).

I. The Commission of the Twelve (7) – [And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits.](#) Mark reveals the calling and commission of the twelve for service. Notice:

A. Their Calling – [And he called unto him the twelve.](#) Jesus called each of these men to follow Him, promising to make them fishers of men. Now the time has come for them to take what they have learned and use it in Kingdom work. These men were called of the Lord for a specific task. They were all different in abilities and gifts, and yet the Lord had a place of service for each of them. He had called and He would choose the area of service for them.

- Often this passage is looked at in light of a preacher or pastor's calling. While I do not seek to minimize their calling, nor would I encourage entering ministry apart from a clear call from the Lord, every believer is called of the Lord to engage in Kingdom work. We all have a responsibility to share the Gospel and reach the lost. The specific giftedness we receive and the particular area of service comes from the Lord. Just as with the twelve, He has a specific work for each of us.

B. Their Pairing (7) – And he called unto him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two.

Jesus called the twelve unto Him collectively, and He began to send them out in pairs of two. Like the call to a specific area of service, the Lord also chose which two of the twelve would work together. He knew the men better than they knew themselves and paired them up according to His divine wisdom and will.

- Some commentaries believe Matthew's listing of the twelve reveals the order in which the men were sent out, and whom each one worked with. [Matthew 10:1-4 – And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.](#) ^[2] Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James *the son* of Zebedee, and John his brother; ^[3] Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; ^[4] Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. John Butler states: *This final pair would be a most fitting pair. Simon the Canaanite was formerly a member of the Zealots ("Zelotes"—[Luke 6:15](#)) a radical and forceful political party. Judas Iscariot was the two-faced betrayer of our Lord who stole money from the treasury of which he was the keeper. Simon would be a good partner for Judas Iscariot; for Simon, a former Zealot would, more than any other disciple, be too tough for Judas Iscariot to manipulate or bully around.* ⁱ (This practice of going out two by two remains the accepted means of visitation and ministry today.)

C. Their Equipping (7b) – and gave them power over unclean spirits. While these men were young in their faith and new to ministry, they were not expected to engage in these efforts within their own strength and wisdom. The Lord gave them power over the unclean spirits they would encounter. This particular word refers to "*inherent power*". It has the idea of someone "*possessing the right to do a thing and having the power to carry it out.*" ⁱⁱ

- While we do not engage in exorcisms of unclean spirits, every believer is empowered from the Lord. In fact, we are all indwelt with the Holy Spirit from the moment of conversion. Ministry is much like other pursuits in that it becomes easier the more we engage in its efforts, but we are never alone, even as new, young believers. We have the guidance and wisdom of the Spirit to aid us as we seek to serve the Lord. [John 14:12 – Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.](#)

II. The Instruction for the Twelve (8-11) – Prior to sending them on their way Jesus offered vital instruction for their work. He spoke of:

A. Their Provisions (8-9) – And commanded them that they should take nothing for *their* journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in *their* purse: ^[9] But *be* shod with sandals; and not put on two coats. The twelve were allowed only a small amount of provisions for their journey. They were allowed to have a staff for walking, shoes on their feet, and the clothes on their back. Jesus even commanded not to take two coats. They were not to take anything else, no traveler's bag, no food, or any money. This was done for a specific reason – the disciples needed to learn to live by faith, trusting the Lord to provide for their every need.

- Most in modern ministry would do well to consider this admonition. Far too many view their ministry environment as a means of privilege and prosperity. Like the original twelve, we too must learn to walk by faith, trusting the Lord to provide for us as we surrender in service to Him.

B. Their Accommodations (10) – And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. As they entered a town or village and found a welcoming place to stay, they were expected to abide there until they departed into another area. They were not to move needlessly about from one house to another. They were expected to accept and appreciate the hospitality of those with whom they resided. Jesus did not want the twelve to be viewed as greedy or expecting to have the best of everything. They had been called to serve others, not to receive the finest accommodations.

- This goes hand in hand with the previous thought. Ministry was never intended to be about the minister and meeting his every want and desire. For many throughout history, ministry has been used as a tool to manipulate others in order to obtain wealth and privilege. We are not called to live better than those around us, but to join in their struggles and share in their suffering. If a man is serving the Lord for the material benefits, he is a hireling and not a true shepherd.

C. Their Rejection (11) – And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city. Jesus also wanted to prepare them for the rejection that would inevitably come from some. Not everyone would welcome them or embrace their message. They would face rejection as they sought to serve the Lord. They were not to take such rejection personally. This was in reality a rejection of the Lord, not them. Rather than engaging in unprofitable debate, they were told to simply leave that place and shake the dust off their feet as a testimony against them. The Lord would deal with their rejection in His time and according to His will.

- As we strive to serve the Lord, we too will be rejected at times. Like the disciples, we must shake it off and move on. We cannot allow the dust of unbelief and doubt to cling to us, possibly

causing doubt and despair in our lives. We must remember that they are in reality rejecting the Lord, not us. They will one day give account of their lives before the Lord. Those who reject Him have rejected the sole means of salvation.

III. The Submission of the Twelve (12-13) – Finally we discover the submissive obedience of the twelve regarding their call. Consider:

A. Their Movement (12a) – *And they went out.* This is very simple and yet extremely profound. They responded to the Lord's call and engaged in the work of ministry. We too must sense the need to actively engage in the work of the Lord. The fields are white, ready for harvest. Time is short and we must redeem the time, taking advantage of every opportunity!

B. Their Message (12b) – *And they went out, and preached that men should repent.* As the twelve went out in different directions to various places, they shared a common message. They all challenged those who would hear to examine their hearts, repent of sin, and turn to Christ for salvation.

- This is a message little shared today, and despised by the majority. Few want to hear a message of repentance. We must continue to proclaim the need for genuine repentance. One cannot experience salvation apart from repentance. This involves more than guilt or regret for sin; it speaks of abandoning sin, confessing our need for the Lord, and turning toward Him for salvation. Regardless of our specific area of service, we must all proclaim the Gospel message!

C. Their Ministry (13) – *And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.* They not only preached repentance, they also ministered to the needs of those they encountered. They used the power they had received to cast out devils and heal the sick. They were sensitive to the individual needs of those around them.

- While I am convinced these gifts and abilities ceased within the first generation of believers, a principle remains that we must consider. It has been rightly said, "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." We cannot merely preach a message of repentance without compassion and grace. One of the best ways to reach the unsaved is through coming alongside them in their need, and doing all we can to minister to them. We are called to unashamedly proclaim the Gospel, but we must not neglect daily ministry through grace and love.

Conclusion: The calling and guidance of the twelve for ministry provides much needed insight for the church today. Have we responded to the call to serve the Lord and others? Are we obediently serving the Lord in the area He has chosen for our lives? Are we doing all we can to reach the unsaved? Have you responded to the call for salvation? One cannot serve the Lord apart from salvation? If He is speaking today, respond to Him!

ⁱ Analytical Bible Expositor - Analytical Bible Expositor – Mark.

ⁱⁱ The Sermon Notebook - The Sermon Notebook – Mark.