

IN THE LORD'S SERVICE ... (Mk. 6:7-13; 30-32)

Mark 6:30 And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. **31** And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. **32** And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

In our previous study we were looking at the commissioning of the twelve disciples by Jesus. He delegated to them the preaching of the Gospel and also gave them special apostolic powers. He sent them out and told them their message would be accepted by some and rejected by others, **12** And they went out, and preached that men should repent. **13** And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them.

From verse fourteen to verse twenty-nine Mark inserts how John the Baptist was murdered by Herod, followed by the discussion as to whether or not Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead.

Then, in verse thirty Mark returns to the twelve disciples ... and to their report following the time of mission, **Mk. 6:30** And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. **31** And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. **32** And they departed into a desert place by ship privately. [*Notice Mark's repetition of 'And'*]

Before we go any further ... there is a very encouraging principle being presented here. When John the Baptist was at the River Jordan, he alone was preaching righteousness, repentance, and the Kingdom of God, - *he* was the *only* preacher preaching God's message. And then along came Jesus and He began preaching the same message ... so, there were *two* powerful preachers in Israel at that time.

But when Herod killed John the Baptist, there was once again only *one* preacher, - Jesus. It looked as if Satan was hindering the preaching of the Gospel for he had managed to *half* the number of preachers ... However, a couple of years later, - in *John's* place, - God raised up twelve more preachers! It demonstrates how even when it seems so spiritually dark, as John the apostle wrote, **Jn. 1:5** the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. ... No matter how hard the devil tries he will never be able to silence the voice of God or to extinguish the light of the Gospel.

Isn't that an encouragement for today? The apostle Peter wrote, **I Peter 1:25** the word of the Lord endureth for ever. As long as this world remains, God's Word will be preached, - that is a promise! Isaiah declared, **Is. 40:8** The grass withereth, the flower

fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. ... And Jesus said, **18** Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

What God has written in this Book, He stands over! It contains no error. It has its source in Him for He is its Author. And since He never changes neither does His Word. Ps. 33:4 assures us, **For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works are done in truth.** ... And as long as this world remains, His truth will always continue to be preached and taught. Communism could not stop it, neither can Islam, Hinduism, Secularism or any other enemy of the Gospel. Not even the most dangerous enemy of the Gospel, - so-called 'Christian' apostasy, in all its various forms, - can stop the advancement of the truth of God. ... Even though King David mourned over the evilness of society, **Ps. 12:8** *The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted* ... he nevertheless recognised it cannot stop the power of the Word of God, **6** *The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.* **7** *Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.*

Herod had killed John the Baptist, - ... it *seemed* as if evil was triumphing and good was on the decline ... but out of such a wicked crime against God, Jesus raised up and sent forth His twelve disciples. God had replaced the one with another twelve! His work could not be stopped ... and He would achieve every purpose He had decreed in eternity. That is the basis of the confidence we have in Him today ... for in Him we are more than conquerors.

Not a bit of wonder these returning disciples had so much to tell Jesus about! Notice the way Mark describes it, **30** *And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus,* - they didn't need to be called ... they weren't too busy ... they weren't so tired they had to lie down and 'take a sleep' ... they hadn't gone off back home to see their families. No, they *gathered themselves together unto Jesus* ... That was their priority ... They were excited. They wanted to tell Him about all they had done in His service! They were like excited little children, hardly able to wait to tell their loving father how much they had enjoyed it.

Notice also how Mark relates their conversation, **30** *And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.* ... Was there a massive revival throughout the country though? Was there a massive revival even in Galilee? Did they see the hordes piling into the synagogues to hear them explain how the Lord Jesus was the fulfilment of the message of the prophets and the Old Testament? Did they see great waves of converts to Christ and to His Gospel? ... *No, they didn't!*

Why were they so excited then? They were so excited because of their privilege in serving Christ. Yes, they had done wonders, - they had seen the mighty power of God at work in the driving out of demons and in the healing of the sick ... but there is no mention of *thousands* turning to Christ and being saved. Here is the point ... Each of those disciples were so joyful to have been called into His service, to have been trusted to represent Him, and to do His work for Him ... that it was a real privilege to be included in that number. ... It was a real privilege to serve Christ! ... Is that how you see belonging to the Lord Jesus? You needn't necessarily be seeing great things being done, but at the same time, you are serving Him to your very best ability. ... It is not your job and mine to save souls, - we could never do that for God alone is the only One Who can do that ... But we are to be faithful to Him, and in being faithful to Him we are privileged to be working for Him and serving Him.

And there is something else here too ... This is the only place in the Gospel of Mark where the Twelve disciples are described as 'apostles'. Now, if we believe Mark wrote what Peter was telling him ... consider how significant that is! ... What is the difference between a disciple and an apostle? Well, a disciple is a student, and an apostle is a sent one ... A disciple is a learner, and an apostle is one who has 'graduated' sufficiently to be sent out to preach. ... Jesus had been teaching them ... He had been showing them how to *serve*, and now they were *servicing* ... and **30 the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus** ... Jesus, let me tell You what happened when I preached the Gospel ... let me tell You what happened when I demonstrated Your power and the sick were healed. Jesus, we went into homes where we were so warmly welcomed ... Yes, there were other places we entered and they didn't want to have anything to do with us or our message ... but we moved on and we used the opportunity to introduce and to preach the Gospel in new places ... *Jesus, in Your power and with Your authority, we could not be stopped!* ... Isn't that what Jesus said would happen, **Mt. 16:18 I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**

Of course, the full and final sending out of the apostles did not take place until after the ascension of Jesus into glory ... that is when He commanded them, **Mk. 16:15 Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.** ... And He sent them out with the promise that in the Lord's service the impossible would be accomplished!

In the United Kingdom we (the Church) are being overrun (it seems), and secular society keeps telling us we are on the decline. Society is convinced we are 'on the way out'. ... And we must confess it looks like that! Churches are emptying, or being taken over and made into places their original builders could never have

anticipated. And unless you agree with the world, and adopt the ways of the world, we will become as extinct as the dinosaurs. ... That is what we are being told anyway! ... I don't believe them, for I believe God's Word instead.

He never says we shall become extinct. He never indicates His people are destined to be banished into some oblivion. Instead, He promised His disciples, **Lk. 22:29** I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; **30** That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ... That is what we have to look forward to! The Church won't be the 'underdogs' for the Church, - God's Redeemed Israel into which we have been added through God's electing grace, - will reign with Christ. Indeed, that is what the two parallel passages in Matthew and Luke tell us, **Mt. 10:7** And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. ... **Lk. 9:2** And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God ... And that was the message Jesus was preaching when He began, for example, Mk. 1:14,15,17,34,39, etc ... and now *they* are preaching it too. ... And, in fact, there are more preaching that exact same message today than ever before!

People cast it up to us that we are losing the spiritual battle ... We're not, for there are more Gospel preachers today than at any other time *ever*. And there are more people being saved today than at any other time *ever*. Churches are packed and filled to overflowing in many countries where the Gospel has been extended to in recent times ... where they have been trying to *silence* the Gospel!

Well, - these doubters and sceptics ask, - why isn't it happening here in the United Kingdom? Unfortunately, they are right ... By and large, it is *not* happening in the United Kingdom, but there is a very clear reason for that ... This nation has been mightily blessed in the past, - and that was what made it *Great*, but we have turned our back on God ... and He will not be mocked ... He will not be insulted and stand back and 'leave it at that' and take no action because when a people reject Him they revoke the stability and the blessings with which they once had been privileged ... and that was the explanation Jesus had already given for what was happening in His own country.

... And even before the disciples went out He had already told them, **Mk. 6:11** 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 Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city. In other words, I firmly believe these islands which have been so greatly favoured by God, and whose greatness was built upon those blessings have turned away from Him,

and fallen under His judgment ... and that is why how we are in the mess we are in today.

‘They’ say we need Europe ... but it is not Europe we need, for Europe is disorganised and chaotic. ‘They’ say we need America ... *ditto* ... it is not America we need either. What we need is a turning once again back to God ... That is what we need!

Ah, but David, waken up! It will never happen, - you are living in ‘cloud-cuckoo’ land. ... I know exactly where I am living. I know exactly what is going on today, *and* I also know the power of God. He is sovereign, - there is none that compares with Him ... and when the disciples left Jesus and went, - at His bidding, - throughout Galilee, they went in obedience to do His service in the power of His strength, and when they came back, they could hardly wait until they **Mk. 6:30** gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. ... They were so excited in serving Jesus!

It is still happening today, just as Jesus promised for He said, **Mt. 24:14** *And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations. ... And that is what is happening, and the progress of the preaching of the Gospel cannot be halted! ... Don't believe it when they say we are ‘on our way out’, for we are not. The Church of Christ will be here when they won't! ... Here is how Isaiah described it will all work in God's favour, ² And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. ³ And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ And he shall judge among the nations ... ^{52:7} How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! ⁸ Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.*

There was no other message these disciples were sent to proclaim, except the message that our God reigns! Israel was under the yoke of the Roman Empire ... Israel's religion had been polluted and contaminated with gross apostasy, but turning to Christ could bring them back ... and that is what these disciples preached. ...

You see, the disciples/apostles were convinced of their message because they were convinced of Jesus. Maybe that is the problem within our churches today, - we are not as convinced of Jesus as they were ... We need to be more persuaded and certain that He continues to have the power to save, the power to keep, the power to maintain His message even when people don't want to listen, and His promise that He is coming back again for us.

And there is another important aspect here too, - it could almost be missed. Yes, it is each disciple's personal accountability to the Saviour, but look closer and we also see each disciple's personal accountability *to each other*. They went out *together*, worked *together*, they commended *each other* ... as God's servants and disciples, they stood *together* for the Lord. How necessary *that* is today that we serve Him together ... not 'me in my small corner and you in yours'.

And then Jesus recognised the work they were doing for Him, He tenderly and compassionately saw their *human need*, [Mk. 6:31](#) And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. ³² And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.

Our Lord He cares for His people, [Ps. 103:14](#) For he knoweth our frame. He knows our needs, [Heb. 4:15](#) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

The work was physically demanding and spiritually exhausting, and He gave them rest, - indeed, such was the promise He had made in Mt. 11:29, [Take ye yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.](#) ... He rewarded their faithfulness, and He drew them aside. ... And just notice the intimate way Mark describes how they made their way to the rest, ³² [And they departed into a desert place by ship privately](#) ... and in the Greek it is "by the ship" ... Not just *any* boat they happened to come across. No, this was a /ship/boat Jesus had already set apart and provided for the purpose of resting His disciples.

He does everything for us, and His Church, - His Bride, - is the focus of His attention on earth. We owe Him everything, and yet He still insists on giving to us, "For all the Lord hath done for me, I never will cease to praise Him!" None of these disciples were men of renown, - they would not have been known outside of their own locality ... and yet, Jesus chose them to be His servants, and He taught them and gave them all they needed to serve Him.

What a marvellous calling and privilege to be saved, - it is all of God's grace ... God sent His Son to Calvary to purchase your redemption and mine, so that we would become His. He paid the price of our salvation using the currency of the blood of His Son. You are His child because you are born into His family ... and today you have a home promised in Heaven. ... That is why we ought to be serving Him, - with every breath in our bodies, - ... and also that others will come to know Him too ... and to enjoy the privileges and promises which await His Redeemed people in glory. Amen.