**Going with the Gospel**

Mark 6:7-13

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On January 23rd of this year, after $1 beer night at a hockey game at U.S. Bank Arena in Cincinnati, Jake Strotman and his drinking buddies approached a band of Baptist street preachers. Strotman felt like these preachers were *“condemning him”* so he let them know what he thought of their preaching: *“They were telling me I was going to hell…I didn’t understand why they thought they could judge me.”*

Screaming and cussing was followed by a lot of pushing and shoving. Strotman somehow ended up at the bottom of a pile, in his words, *“eating asphalt.”* He pushed himself up with one hand and planted another hand squarely into the face of the bespectacled eye of Joshua Johnson, who had been preaching the word of God. Johnson’s face was bloodied and Strotman was charged with assault.

In late May, Strotman appeared before judge William Mallory. The judge told him that he was looking at 90 days in jail.Strotman sure didn’t want to go to jail: *“Anything but jail, thought the self-employed salesman of windows, sidings and doors.”*

The judge then turned to the preacher and said*, “I’m trying to get to something reasonable here. And I'll be honest with you guys, sometimes in certain places people don’t want to be preached to. You agree with that right?”*

Yes, he said, he did.

*“I admire the fact that you want to spread the word of God because I’m a religious man, too,”* the judge said. *“Also, the thing about religion, I think it is kind of personal and for me I don’t try to impose my religious views on other people except for sometimes in this room.”*

Have you ever noticed that some people don’t want to be preached to? In our passage for today we’re going to see that Jesus sent out his disciples on a very personal short-term preaching mission. We’re going to learn that *when we go with the gospel, some will receive it and others will reject it.*

Turn in your Bibles to Mark 6:7-13: ***“And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.  He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts—but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.  And he said to them, ‘Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. 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.’ So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.  And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.”***

Before we dive in, it’s important to note that this passage contains some unique and specific instructions for the twelve disciples as they were sent out on a one-time mission. This short-term mission trip was designed to teach and train as part of their intense internship (similar to the internship Justin Rumley is having this summer). They had heard a lot of preaching from Jesus and now it was time for them to put it into practice. There are at least four reasons why I believe these instructions are not normative for us today.

* **They were initially sent only to the Israelites.**  Matthew 10:5-7: ***“Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”***
* **The next time they are sent out the restriction of no provisions is reversed.** We see this in Luke 23:35-36: ***“And he said to them, ‘When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?” They said, ‘Nothing.’*** ***He said to them, ‘But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack…’”***
* **Later, their mandate is to make disciples *“among all the nations”* according to Matthew 28:19-20.** Acts 1:8 says we’re to start in Jerusalem but not stay there as the gospel is also intended for the ***“ends of the earth.”***
* **The early church did not view these initial instructions as normative.** Sometimes they ministered in pairs; other times they did not. Paul financed his ministry as a tentmaker. By the way, our newest missionaries were approved on Tuesday night by the deacons. They [I’m leaving their names out for safety reasons] will be targeting an unreached people group of 16 million in India while working at a job as a way to gain credibility and acceptance.

While not prescriptive, we can draw three principles from this passage that have application to our lives today.

**1. Teamwork.** Look at verse 7: ***“And He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two…”*** The word for ***“called”*** has the idea of summoning. The use of ***“began”*** gives the sense that Jesus individually commissioned each pair. Interestingly, ***“send”*** is the Greek *apostello*, or apostle and means, *“to be thrust out*.*”*  Remember that this was Jesus’ plan all along. He recruited the twelve to spend time with Him according to 3:14 *and* to send them out: ***“that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach.”*** This is a great reminder for us – we gather *in order* to go!

And he sent them out ***“two by two.”*** Jesus used teams of two on at least two other occasions. In Mark 11:1 two disciples were sent to get a colt for Christ and in Mark 14:3 a team of two were told to get a room ready for the Passover meal. Later, Jesus sends out 70 in teams of two (Luke 10:1). John the Baptist sent out two in Luke 7:18 and Paul and Barnabas served as teammates in the Book of Acts. Moses and Aaron are good examples of teamwork in the Old Testament and Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says: ***“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow.”***

Here are some benefits of teamwork in ministry:

* Greater safety
* Encouragement
* Accountability
* Blending of gifts and abilities to offset the weakness of the other
* While one is preaching, the other can be praying
* They can tag team in a conversation
* It’s a great environment for mutual mentorship
* They can be witnesses to what happens. In John 8:17, Jesus references Deuteronomy 17:6, ***“In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true.”***

I want to give a shout out to all the junior high and high school sponsors for stepping up your teamwork this past year. Props to Greg Johnston for serving the junior high students. We want to particularly thank the tenacious teamwork that Chris and Jamie Rogers have exhibited in leading our high school ministry. Let’s show our appreciation to them right now. Kyle Parks and his marriage partner Liesl, will be moving to the QCA next month as Kyle begins his new role as Youth and Young Adults Pastor on Wednesday, July 6th. The cool thing is that Chris and Jamie will continue serving as teammates on the student ministry team.

I love how God has made each of us members of Team Edgewood. I view my fellow pastors and staff and deacons and trustees and ministry leaders and members and regular attenders as teammates. I try not to say that we have “staff meetings” but rather that we have “team times” together. We serve together as those sent out on mission.

I wonder how this worked out when Jesus organized the disciples into six teams of two. We see how they are paired up in Matthew 10:2-4: ***“The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.”*** I wonder how Thomas the doubter got along with Matthew who struggled with dishonesty? Simon probably felt like he got the short straw when he was linked with Judas!

Any of you remember the old A-Team TV show with Mr. T? In one episode, some drug lords hired a bunch of mercenaries to take down the A-Team to no avail. [Col. John "Hannibal" Smith](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0000577/?ref_=tt_trv_qu) (played by George Peppard) looks at their defeated foes and proclaims: *“Now, next time you think you wanna take somebody out, pal; don’t get yourself a squad, get yourself a team!”* The main point is that a team of committed people beats a squad of individuals who don’t care about each other.

Friends, if you know Jesus Christ, you are on the A-Team! I love how like-minded ministries are partnering together for gospel proclamation in this church, in the QCA, in our country and all over the world.

When we serve as teammates, spiritual synergy happens. Here’s a definition I like: *“The working together of two things to produce an affect greater than the sum of the individual efforts.”* Two or more serving together can do more than working separately.

When Jesus sent out these teams, the last part of verse 7 says that He ***“gave them authority over the unclean spirits.”*** They were given power and permission to cast out demons. Or to say it another way, they had the right and the might to minister in the name of Jesus. They were able to multiply the ministry by serving in teams and they got to experience the truth of John 14:12: ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father.”***

*When you go with the gospel, some will receive it and others will reject it.* The first principle is to exhibit teamwork. The second expectation is to trust.

**2. Trust.**  That’s what’s behind the restrictions in verses 8-9: ***“He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their belts—but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics.”*** The staff was like a walking stick and sandals would protect their feet as they walked. Jesus didn’t want them to bring bread or a backpack or a wallet because He wanted to teach them how to trust. They were to go lean and mean so they might lean on the Almighty.

One of the best examples of this is the Contreras family who serve on our Go Team in the inner city of Fresno. I had the joy of meeting with them last February. While most missionaries live on little, they have taken a vow of poverty so they live on a lot less than other missionaries do. When I asked them why they told me they want to live just like the people they are called to reach. Since their neighbors live in poverty, so do they. By the way, Manual and Kim will be our keynote speakers at our Engage Missions Festival in October.

It was time for these teams to put Matthew 6:31-33 into practice: ***“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”***

I’ve never been known for traveling light when our family heads out on a trip. Even though I have four daughters I normally bring more stuff than anyone else. My problem is that I put packing off as long as possible and then in a panic I just empty my dresser drawers into my suitcase. I have my suitcase on our bedroom floor right now in anticipation of our journey out to Virginia for the impending birth of our grandson [this is where you’re supposed to say that I look too young to be a grandpa]. Beth keeps telling me that I don’t have to bring a lot because we can wash clothes when we’re there. This has helped me reduce the volume of my stuff…a little.

I love what George Mueller once said, *“If the Lord fails me this time, it will be the first time.”* Jesus wants them [and us] to learn that He can be counted on. The Israelites were in a similar situation in the wilderness for 40 years when they found out that their clothes and sandals did not wear out. Deuteronomy 29:6 tells us why: ***“That you may know that I am the Lord your God.”***

I’m reminded of something I first heard twenty years or so ago: *“Attempt something so great for God that unless He is in it, it’s doomed to failure.”*

The disciples were told to not only travel light but to also serve with a sense of urgency. I wonder if their minds went back to the instructions given by God to the Israelites in 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.”***

A couple weeks ago the pastoral team had a one-day retreat in which we focused on the importance of institutionalizing urgency. We began by listening to a podcast from Craig Groeschel. He made several good points but I want to share just one – *“Attack, don’t yak.”* He challenged us with this statement, *“As your organization grows, movement naturally slows. As an organization ages, it moves from a bias for action to a bias for discussion.”* We then discussed how we must live with a sense of urgency both personally and pastorally. Each team member is now working on several “stretch goals” that we are trusting God for.

Jesus gives some additional instructions in verse 10: ***“And he said to them, ‘Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there.’”*** They weren’t to hop over to a bigger house with more amenities. The temptation is always to seek comfort and luxury but God wants us to learn the secret of contentment. 1 Timothy 6:6: ***“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”***

Here we see the importance of believers offering hospitality and financial support to missionaries. A few months ago, Beth and I decided to save a little more from my paycheck each week and then ask God how we can bless a missionary or ministry with it. We’ve already been able to give to Moody Radio and to World Relief in ways we would not have been to if we had not started this plan.

I listened to a podcast recently featuring Brad Lomenick and heard him talk about H3 Leadership:

* Be Humble
* Stay Hungry
* Always Hustle

As the disciples demonstrated teamwork and grew in their trust of God, I’m sure they remained humble and hungry as they hustled to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Would you say that you are humble and hungry and that you hustle to share the gospel?

*When we go with the gospel, some will receive it and others will reject it.* First, serve with a spirit of teamwork. Second, grow in trust. Finally, make sure you are giving testimony about Jesus Christ.

**3. Testimony.** A quote often attributed to Francis of Assisi goes like this: *“Preach the gospel. And if necessary, use words.”* While that might be cute and clever it’s not biblically correct. The gospel *must always be* communicated with words.

Jesus is preparing his teams for rejection in verse 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.”*** This graphic display has its roots in Jewish culture. When a Jewish man or woman would travel into a pagan land, when they would return they would shake the dust off their clothes and sandals as a way to keep the contamination from coming back with them. Here’s the message – anyone who refused to listen to the preachers sent by Jesus was as unclean in God’s sight as Gentiles were in theirs.

For Jesus to tell his disciples to do this to the Jewish people when they reject the gospel would have been extremely offensive. Matthew 10:15 ratchets this up when Jesus says, ***“It will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.”*** Here’s the principle: the more revelation you’ve received, the more responsibility you have to repent and believe. To whom much is given, much is required. All Sodom and Gomorrah had was the testimony of wayward Lot and they were judged. How much more will they be?

Don’t miss the point. The disciples were to do this with a broken heart and not with a sense of glee. The act of shaking the dust off was a warning that to persist in rejecting Jesus was to face judgment. This was actually a merciful act designed to shock them into the reality that they were headed to hell.

It’s important to keep in mind that a few will receive and most will reject. Matthew 7:13-14: ***“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”*** Some will open their homes with hospitality and others will close their fists with hostility. Some will listen when you preach and others will lash out. Some will accept and others may assault you. That happens right here in this country but is even more evident in other places where persecution can lead to loss of lifestyle and life itself.

Our daughter Megan watched a video series this spring called, “I am N” and was really impacted by believers in Iraq that are being persecuted. Radical Muslims (ISIS) have spray-painted the Arabic letter ن, or “N,” on the homes and businesses of Christians, who were given a choice to convert to Islam, leave or die. These courageous believers refused to deny their faith, and more than 100,000 fled with little more than the clothes on their backs. For more information about this, check out the Voice of the Martyrs at persecution.com. We have some “I-AM-N” bracelets on the Resource Table if you want to pick one up. We’ll be spending more time on this in November and will have additional resources available then. I put a link on the Sermon Extras tab if you want to find out more information or you can talk with Chasity Holmquist.

Allow me to say something very bold. Comfortable Christianity won’t change the world! In John 16:33 Jesus made this promise: ***“In this world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”*** Mark 13:3 says, ***“And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake.”*** Paul sums it up when he writes in 2 Timothy 3:12: ***“Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”***

After being restricted about what they can take with them and being told that many will reject them, these six teams trusted and boldly gave testimony about Jesus Christ by calling people to repentance in verse 12: ***“So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.”*** They were told what to take, where to stay and what to say. Even after knowing that some would receive and some would reject, they still preached repentance.

To repent means, *“a change of mind that leads to a change of action, where you can say, ‘I will stop doing the things I should not do and I will begin to do the things I should do.’”*

Check out what God says in Ezekiel 18:30: ***“Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin.”*** In Mark 1:4, we read that John the Baptist preached repentance. The first words out of Jesus’ mouth in Mark 1:15 were: ***“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”*** In Peter’s preaching in Acts 2:38 he declared these words, ***“Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ…”***

Fellow teammates in the gospel, I’m grieved by how much the gospel message has been watered down in our culture today. To borrow a phrase from Dietrich Bonhoeffer, we live in an age of *“easy believism.”* Check out these words from his book called, “The Cost of Discipleship.” *“Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance…Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ…”* What a contrast to the drivel of the health, wealth and happiness message emanating from many pulpits and screens today as the “name it and claim” gospel gains ground. This message is popular. If you preach repentance you might get punched in the face…or worse.

Verse 13 helps us see that while the disciples preached repentance they were also committed to restoration. They were courageous communicators *and* they were filled with compassion for those inflicted by Satan and by sickness. We must do the same, right? We’re called to preach out *and* to reach out: ***“And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.”***  The disciples learned that Jesus’ power extended beyond His personal presence because they were now representing Him. These exorcisms and healings served to confirm their message. Matthew 10:40: ***“Whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me.”***

This is a summer of missions here at Edgewood. We celebrated World Relief and Pregnancy Resources last weekend. Our Puerto Rico team leaves on July 16. Jim and Amy Smith from Japan and Safe Families will be featured next month as we learn about using our homes for hospitality. We’ll hear about Youth Hope and from Sam and Blessy Thomas from India in August.

Edgewood is all about missions – both short-term and long-term and everything in between. We have missionaries that have been part of our Go team for 6 days and others for over 66 years!

**Interview Questions for George King**

1. Is it true that you have been serving as a missionary since 1950? I think that would make you the longest serving EBC missionary! I’ve been told that God has used you to start over 80 churches in Japan. Could you please share briefly how God drew you to Japan?

2. We’ve been learning about the importance of *teamwork* in ministry. How has God used you and Ellen as a team?

3. You and Ellen have had some health issues recently. How is God using this to increase your *trust* in Him?

4. We’d love to celebrate how God is working in Japan. Could you share a story of how God is using one of the Japanese preachers that you helped train to give *testimony* about Christ in order to grow His church?

*When we go with the gospel, some will receive it and others will reject it.* Serve as teammates. Learn to trust. And give a clear testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ as you call people to repentance.

**Action Steps**

The first three action steps I want to suggest are principles the Lord has prompted me to put into practice. I thought if I shared them with you I’ll have greater accountability and they may end up spurring you on to love and good deeds.

**1. Tell yourself everyday that you’re getting older and that life is but a vapor.** Don’t waste your life. Don’t coast. Live with urgency, not complacency. Finish strong.

**2. Tell yourself that everyone you meet is either going to heaven or to hell.** Contemplate the horrors of hell and do all you can to help people go to heaven.

**3. Attempt to meet one new person every day and have a spiritual conversation with them.** This will push you out of your comfort zone. I know it does for me.

**4. Live on mission.** See yourself as sent to your family, your neighbors, your co-workers and your classmates. I listened to a sermon from Matt Chandler on Friday in which he said, *“You are uniquely wired and uniquely placed for unique opportunities.”* 2 Corinthians 5:20: ***“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”***

**5. Find a partner to minister with.**

**6. Pray for and support missionaries.** One pastor says that we only have three options when it comes to missions – *Go, Send,* or *Disobey.*

Let’s pick up the story from the courtroom that I began with…

Just before the judge sentenced the man who had assaulted the preacher, he turned to the defendant and said, *“I’m open to suggestions.”*

With visions of cell bars dancing in his head, Strotman nearly interrupted the judge: *“Your honor, if I may, I would be more than happy to serve a church of your choosing.”*

The judge then turned to the preacher and said, *“So for his penance, what if I make him go to your church a number of Sunday services?”* The preacher loved the idea.

The judge ended up sentencing Strotman to attend 12 consecutive Sunday services at Morning Star Baptist Church for their entire 90-minute services. He must get the weekly program signed by the minister. That’s 18 hours of solid Baptist praising and preaching!

He also paid $480 in court fines and a $2,800 lawyer bill…I wonder if he’ll anything left for the offering?

Listen to what Strotman said about his sentence: *“Three months, that’s not that bad…I’m going to listen with both my ears and keep my mouth shut…Then, maybe I’ll try to sell them some windows.”*

I can’t wait to hear how this story ends. That will be quite a testimony about how God saved him through the preaching of the preacher he punched!

Some of you have heard a lot of preaching…its time now for you to personally repent and receive Jesus Christ!

**Closing Song: “Facing a Task Unfinished”**