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Gospel: Mark 6:1-13
July 4, 2021

When the first Model A cars rolled off the assembly line,

- I doubt that wagon wheel manufacturers,
- the buggy drivers,
- and the horse industry,
- truly understood the major shift
- in manufacturing and transportation
- signaled by that one event.

- When Steve Jobs first introduced the iPhone,

- I doubt that manufacturers of wired phones,
- stand alone cameras,
- and the music industry
- truly realized that smartphones and mobile technology -
- would completely change -
- the way people communicated, -
- shared images and music
- and were connected to one another.

When someone first invited me to a Zoom meeting several years ago

- It certainly didn't occur to me that only a few years later,

- I'd be preaching a sermon in front of a camera
 - for a digital worship service - -
- And when Jesus decided to send out the disciples in teams of two -
 - to be his hands and voice in the world
 - in our reading today from the Gospel of Mark, - -
 - my guess is that the disciples
 - and the early community gathered around Jesus,
 - didn't realize what a major cultural
 - and organizational shift
 - was taking place in this
 - emerging faith community -
- For up to this point,
 - the ministry,
 - the movement was small enough -
 - that Jesus seemingly did all the preaching and teaching,
 - all the healing and helping personally. -
 - If you were sick,
 - Jesus was the one who was present to provide care and healing.
 - If there were lessons to be taught about God,
 - Jesus was the one sharing the message, - -
- but it didn't take long for the ministry to grow. -

- Jesus' presence,
- Jesus' compassion,
- Jesus' teaching was powerful.
- When Jesus spoke,
- people listened.
- When Jesus demonstrated God's love
- in miraculous ways, - -
- word spread - - -
- and more and more people came -
- to see and experience Jesus - -
- Now I imagine it didn't take long
- for Jesus to realized that,
- he couldn't reach every town -
- he couldn't teach every person -
- he couldn't bring healing to everyone in need,
- so Jesus turned to those closest to him -
- turned to those who had walked with him on this journey of faith,
- turned to those who had experienced his teaching personally.
- He called them to use their gifts,
- equipped them for the ministry he is calling them to do,
- gave them instructions to help them along the way
- and then sent them out in teams of two -

- to spread the news about the kingdom of God. - -

- So the disciples, Mark says, “went out and proclaimed that all should repent.

- They cast out many demons,

- and anointed with oil many who were sick

- and cured them.” (Mark 6:12-13)

And through that experience,

- it became clear that

- even without Jesus present,-

- the good news of God’s love for the world could be proclaimed.

- Healing could be experienced.

- Lives could changed.- - -

- For the disciples,

- this change meant they were now active participants in the ministry,

- not just observers to what Jesus was accomplishing -

- Oh - to be sure,

- the disciples weren’t on their own yet,

- Jesus still had much to teach them -

- about who God was calling them to be,

- and about how God was inviting all God’s people

- to be in relationship with God -

- and with one another -

- No - - for the remainder of Jesus’ ministry in the world,

- the disciples 'internship' will continue. -
- And under Jesus' guidance,
 - the disciples would see examples
 - of effective teaching -
 - would discover the power of prayer -
 - would experience miracles -
 - and would grow in their faith. -
 - The disciples would make mistakes -
 - would have moments of doubts -
 - and struggle with the magnitude
 - and implications of Jesus' mission
 - to love and bless the world -
 - and the disciples would learn that despite their shortcomings -
 - and moments of doubt -
 - God would be with them -
 - to guide them,
 - support them
 - and work through them
 - to bring the promise of new life in Jesus
 - to a hurting world - -
- Yes at this point in the Gospel of Mark,-
 - there is still much for the disciples to learn,

- but by sending them out in pairs to
 - to be his hands and voice in the world,
- Jesus opens the door, -
 - Jesus lays the foundation -
 - for the continuation of the ministry
 - following the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension -
- and Jesus makes it clear all God's people -
 - regardless of their imperfections, doubts, or shortcomings -
 - can participate in Jesus' mission to love and bless the world, - -
 - can be effective witnesses to God's generous love -

And this approach Jesus pilots that day, works -

- As we see in the book of Acts,
 - when Jesus ascends and the Spirit comes, -
 - the disciples head out into the world proclaiming the story of Jesus,
 - baptizing and teach - -
 - and when the community grows too large
 - for the disciples to handle everything by themselves -
 - they appoint a group of faithful leaders -
 - to feed the widows in their community.-
- The community of believers in Jerusalem send missionaries to other towns -
 - to share the good news.
 - Those missionaries

- bless and appoint leaders in those communities -
- to preach and teach -
- the message of Jesus - -
- and nurture the next generation of faithful witnesses -
- to the good news of God's love in Jesus Christ - -
- The model Jesus pilots that day -
- replicates and repeats itself throughout Christian history.
- And today,
- this model continues - -
- now to be sure,
- the specific techniques used to accomplish God's mission
- to love and bless the world have changed -
- Videos, Tweets, Blogs and Instagram posts
- have mostly replaced handwritten letters -
- to far off communities -
- Offerings given to feed hungry people -
- can reach those in need around the world -
- far quicker than ever before -
- The Gospels, Paul's letters and the Hebrew scriptures -
- can be quickly accessed on a phone or tablet -
- or through one of the billions of Bibles -
- by virtually anyone who can read-

- in nearly any language
- instead of being restricted to handwritten scrolls -
- that could only be accessed by a few
- And thanks to the tools we have in the world today -
- God's people can gather in a digital space -
- to hear God's Word proclaimed,
- to unite their voices in prayer,
- and experience the love and presence of God.
- It's true, much has changed, - -
- but the model Jesus established early in his ministry -
- of calling, blessing, equipping and sending God's people -
- out into the world to be his hands and voice -
- is still the core of how we do ministry today - -
- Which of course means that each of us is a minister -
- each of us is a witness to Jesus' life, death and resurrection -
- and our call, therefore,
- as a community of faith,
- is not simply to gather for worship,
- or to invest our ministry -
- in the hands of one or two people,
- but rather as Jesus showed us today,
- our call is to be an example, a voice, a presence - -

- that helps God's people discover how we can use their gifts-
- in God's service in the world,
- Our call is to be
 - a community where people experience the blessings of being loved
 - and the support of their siblings in Christ -
- Our call is to be
 - a place where people to learn how to pray,
 - to teach,
 - and to share God's love with the world -
- Our call is to be
 - an outpost of compassion and hope -
 - sending God's people out -
 - to share the good news of Jesus' mission to love, bless and save
 - the world.

For as Jesus made clear -

- that day he sent the disciples out into the world -
- whenever we, like those first disciples,
- go out as God's hands and voices in the world
- to meet people where they are,
- to tell the story through our words and lives
- and to share God's compassion
- and healing love with those in need,

- God's mercy and forgiveness will be proclaimed,
- God's healing will be experienced
- and lives will changed.-