

Lesson 6 4 September, 2011

Jesus Sends Forth the Twelve

Lesson Scope: *Mark 6*

Lesson Focus

Christ's earthly ministry focused on teaching. His compassion for the needs of man caused Him to teach wherever He went and whomever He met. In Mark 6:34, Jesus viewed the multitude as "sheep not having a shepherd." His desire for them caused Him to prepare His disciples to help Him reach the many needs. The sending forth of the disciples also served to prepare them to take up the work after His departure.

Jesus often experienced rejection by those whom He longed to help. In the previous lesson, the Gadarenes rejected Him after He healed the demoniac. In Mark 6:1-6, He was rejected by His own countrymen. In Mark 6:11, He warned the disciples of those who will reject them. He showed by example that rejection does not deter God's people from their work and purpose in the world.

The blessed privilege of laboring for Christ includes responsibility and accountability. Those who labor for Christ can claim His promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

In the setting of this lesson, Jesus was personally sending forth His helpers. Jesus is no longer with us in person, so the church is given the authority to send brethren and sisters to labor in His vineyard. For one to embark on missionary work on his own is not God's intention and is usually not as effective. Emphasize the need of the brotherhood in our evangelistic efforts.

Not all believers can be sent to a foreign field for missionary work. We are reminded that there is work to do everywhere, and there is need for faithful laborers on the home front as well as abroad.

It is important to maintain an eternal perspective in God's work. This will help us to not focus so much on where and whom we are helping, but rather that we are faithfully laboring for God's cause where He has placed us.

Lesson Aim: To define responsibilities of those who labor for Christ.

Theme Verse: *Matthew 28:19*. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Lesson Text

"He ... Gave Them Power"

Mark 6:7-11 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; ⁸ 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. ¹⁰ And he said unto them, In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye depart from that place. 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.

"They Went ... and Preached"

Mark 6:12-14 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*. ¹⁴ And king Herod heard *of him*; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.

"Come ... Rest a While"

Mark 6:30-32 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.

"Give Ye Them to Eat"

Mark 6:33-44 ³³ And the people saw them departing, and many knew him, and ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them, and came together unto him. ³⁴ And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and he began to teach them many things. ³⁵ And when the day was now far spent, his disciples came unto him, and said, This is a

desert place, and now the time *is* far passed: ³⁶ Send them away, that they may go into the country round about, and into the villages, and buy themselves bread: for they have nothing to eat. ³⁷ He answered and said unto them, Give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread, and give them to eat? ³⁸ He saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes. ³⁹ And he commanded them to make all sit down by companies upon the green grass. ⁴⁰ And they sat down in ranks, by hundreds, and by fifties. ⁴¹ And when he had taken the five loaves and the two fishes, he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and brake the loaves, and gave *them* to his disciples to set before them; and the two fishes divided he among them all. ⁴² And they did all eat, and were filled. ⁴³ And they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments, and of the fishes. ⁴⁴ And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men.

Questions for Study

"He ... Gave Them Power"

1. Why did Jesus send forth the disciples by twos?
2. How might material involvements become a threat in spiritual life?
3. Why do some Christians find it hard to rebuke sin?

"They Went ... and Preached"

4. What should be the primary emphasis of our message to the world?
5. What is the church's responsibility in relation to humanitarian aid?

"Come ... Rest a While"

6. What do Jesus' words teach us in Mark 6:31?
7. What are some practical ways that laborers with Christ find refreshment?

"Give Ye Them to Eat"

8. Explain what Jesus saw in Mark 6:34.
9. How does Christlike compassion evidence itself in the believer?
10. Enumerate some of the blessings associated with full surrender of our resources to the Lord's work.

Analyzing the Passage

Jesus' sending forth the disciples two by two became a precedent for mission work. This approach was used numerous times in the Book of Acts also.

In Mark's account, Jesus allowed them to take "a staff only" but in Matthew's and Luke's accounts He also forbade taking staves. Apparently

He did not want each of them to have a staff, but one staff for two men. Verses 31 and 33 show some interesting contrasts—the desert became a crowded place, their rest was filled with labor, and the "no leisure so much as to eat" gave way to feeding the five thousand. The desert place (Mark 6: 31) was an unpopulated place. Verse 39 indicates that it was a grassy place. A penny was a day's wages (Mark 6:37).

Principles and Applications

"He ... Gave Them Power"

1. The Christian laborer finds security with other faithful believers and strength through Christ (Mark 6:7). Having two people gave credence to their message and was a safeguard in speaking the truth. Two would also provide emotional support and strength for the task and help them face trials that would come.

Christ imparted supernatural power to them to cast out unclean spirits. Matthew 10:1 and Luke 9:1-2 show that they were also given power to heal all manner of sickness and diseases. This imparting of special power identified them with Jesus' ministry.

2. The exercise of faith keeps the Christian laborer free from unnecessary material entanglements (Mark 6:8-9). Faith causes one to realize his dependence on God for sustenance and protection. In 1 Samuel 17:39, David rejected the armor given him in favor of the Lord's protection. As one avoids material entanglements, his faith in God is strengthened.

Temporal material involvements are a necessary part of life. God wants us to be good stewards of material things. Earthly securities, risky financial investments, the unequal yoke in business, and insurances are just a few of the material involvements that threaten to entangle us and destroy our faith in God.

3. Those who labor for Christ must communicate that to reject Christ is to choose judgment (Mark 6:11). We may not choose to make judgment the initial subject of discussion, but we do finally need to give a warning. People would rather not think of judgment. Many professing Christians hope to appease God by a life of good works. They like to think of God as a God of love who would never send anyone to a place of torment. But God's Word is clear about the reality of judgment, and that Word will be the final authority.

"They Went ... and Preached"

4. Proclaiming the message of repentance is a foundational responsibility

of the Christian laborer (6:12). This was the message of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2) and of Christ Himself (Mark 1:14-15).

Many nominal Christian churches are involved in "mission work." Many humanitarian efforts are directed by churches. However, many of them fail to make true disciples of those they meet. Christ's command in the Great Commission is to preach the Gospel and teach men to observe all of Christ's commands. Physical and material needs should be secondary to the spiritual.

"Come ... Rest a While"

5. The Christian laborer should sense his accountability to his fellow laborers and to the Master (Mark 6:30). Christ is the Head of the church. As members of His body, we are equal one with another, and all are subject to the Head. Christ has every right to hold us accountable for our labor and our cooperation with the brotherhood. "For we are labourers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9). This concept should create an openness among the brotherhood and a desire to minister to needs even as Christ did. See Mark 10:45.

6. Every laborer needs times of spiritual refreshment (6:31). Just as the physical body needs regular rest and refreshment, the spiritual man needs to be revived and refreshed as well. Christ was aware of His disciples' need, and in His humanity, He desired refreshment as well.

While physical exhaustion may hinder one's spiritual vibrancy, one cannot expect spiritual refreshment by physical rest and relaxation alone.

God's Word is the source of refreshment. One is refreshed as he maintains a vibrant devotional life with the Lord and fellowships with the saints. Attending Bible schools, revival meetings, and churchwide meetings require physical exertion while providing spiritual refreshment.

"Give Ye Them to Eat"

7. The compassion of Jesus' heart must touch and motivate those who labor for Him (Mark 6:34-37). Christ saw spiritual needs and desires in the multitude that thronged Him. His example of sacrificing physical rest for the benefit of others should inspire us with a burden for the needy. The plan of the disciples to send the people away to get food was not a cold, calloused command, but rather an interest in their physical well-being. Christ's compassion went a step further. He suggested supplying their need rather than just directing them to do it themselves.

It is right for God's people to minister to material needs, especially when there is spiritual interest also. Wisdom and discernment from the Lord are needed to know where to focus our help. While there may be some room

for personal projects, they should all be under the blessing and within the guidelines of the church.

8. The laborer who surrenders his resources to Jesus will find his own needs supplied (Mark 6:38-42). The disciples' commitment to Christ required an act of faith. This allowed them to enjoy the same physical nourishment that the multitude enjoyed. When we surrender all to Christ, we can have the confidence that "my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).

9. Those who labor for Christ must exercise good stewardship of Christ's provisions (Mark 6:43). The abundance of Christ's provisions does not excuse wastefulness or neglect. One who truly appreciates all that Christ has done for him will seek to maximize the potential of Christ's provisions to meet the needs of all who accept Him.

Important Teachings

1. The Christian laborer finds security with other faithful believers and strength through Christ (Mark 6:7).

2. The exercise of faith keeps the Christian laborer free from unnecessary material entanglements (Mark 6:8-9).

3. Those who labor for Christ must communicate that to reject Christ is to choose judgment (Mark 6:11).

4. Proclaiming the message of repentance is a foundational responsibility of the Christian laborer (Mark 6:12).

5. The Christian laborer should sense his accountability to his fellow laborers and to the Master (Mark 6:30).

6. Every laborer needs times of spiritual refreshment (Mark 6:31).

7. The compassion of Jesus' heart must touch and motivate those who labor for Him (Mark 6:34-37).

8. The laborer who surrenders his resources to Jesus will find his own needs supplied (Mark 6:38-42).

9. Those who labor for Christ must exercise good stewardship of Christ's provisions (Mark 6:43).

Answers to Questions

1. Why did Jesus send forth the disciples by twos?

Christ was establishing precedent for organized outreach. It also gave credence to their message and serves as a safeguard in speaking the truth. The emotional support of one another would give them strength for the task and help them face the trials that would come.

2. How might material involvements become a threat in spiritual life?

Material involvements can easily be a distraction from the most important things, because we relate more easily to the tangible. They tend to rob people of contentment. The unequal yoke many times leads to compromising principle and eventual departure from the truth. Earthly securities, such as investments and insurances, can cause us to put our trust in them instead of in God.

3. Why do some Christians find it hard to rebuke sin?

Some may be ashamed of Christ because they do not appreciate their own salvation enough. Some fear to oppose others because of the response that may come. Others may fear souring a good customer and possibly losing a good financial situation. Notice the example of John the Baptist in Mark 6:18.

4. What should be the primary emphasis of our message to the world?

Our emphasis should be repentance. All have sinned and are in need of God's mercy. Our focus should be on our responsibility and accountability to God rather than merely trying to promote the great blessings and rewards of serving God.

5. What is the church's responsibility in relation to humanitarian aid?

Christ was an example in meeting physical needs—He fed hungry people (6:41) and healed many who were diseased. However, this aid was always in the context of giving spiritual help as well. Many times those who have experienced natural calamities are softened to more readily accept spiritual help. Where spreading the Gospel is not the primary goal, humanitarian aid tends to exalt the person or group rather than God. The account of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 makes it clear that the child of God should be ready to help anyone. Care should be given that in one's zeal to help people, he does not neglect his own family and their needs.

6. What do Jesus' words teach us in Mark 6:31?

Jesus' words teach us that rest and relaxation are sometimes necessary. Humans need physical and spiritual refreshment. Sometimes laborers must separate themselves from the needs temporarily, to take care of their personal needs and refreshment. One must possess before he can give.

7. What are some practical ways that laborers with Christ find refreshment?

They maintain a vibrant personal devotional life with the Lord. They also fellowship with the saints in normal church services, revival meetings, Bible schools, and so forth.

8. Explain what Jesus saw in 6:34.

Jesus saw a multitude of people who were as sheep without a shepherd. They needed someone to feed them, guide them, and satisfy their inner longings. He saw people who were exposed to the attacks of the enemy.

9. How does Christlike compassion evidence itself in the believer?

Such compassion makes us willing to take the time to talk to those who have questions about or interest in spiritual things. We will want to participate in evangelistic efforts such as street meetings and distributing literature. We will not show partiality to people. We will take our spiritual responsibility seriously.

10. Enumerate some of the blessings associated with full surrender of our resources to the Lord's work.

This act of faith will strengthen our faith. It brings a peace and contentment with our lot in life. It brings a confidence that God will supply our needs. Our resources can go a lot further when we allow God to use them to His glory.

Summarizing the Lesson

God desires that all would be saved. It is humbling to realize that He has chosen men and women to do His work. May we be ready and willing to do our part in laboring to save souls.

"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38).

Research Guide

1. Study parallel accounts in other Gospels (Matthew 10, 14; Luke 9; and John 6).
2. Make a study of Bible passages that show God's desire for the salvation of all (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4; Titus 2:11; and others).