

Jesus Commissions the Staff -- 2nd<sup>t</sup> in a series of 5 “The Jesus Enterprise” -- Mark 6:1-13  
 2012 Saint Marks UMC 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost (July 1) 2012

<sup>6:1</sup> He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. <sup>2</sup>On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! <sup>3</sup>Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. <sup>4</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.” <sup>5</sup>And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. <sup>6</sup>And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. <sup>7</sup>He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. <sup>8</sup>He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; <sup>9</sup>but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. <sup>10</sup>He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. <sup>11</sup>If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” <sup>12</sup>So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. <sup>13</sup>They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Last week we were introduced to the nature of the Jesus Enterprise – known as “**JESUS INCORPORATED**” (or “the Body of Christ.”) Today, our Gospel text tells us how Jesus Commissions the Staff in this enterprise. In the following weeks we will explore:

1. How Jesus **Empowers** the Staff
2. How Jesus Shows the Staff the **Need for Balance**
3. How We Must Remember **That It IS Jesus’ Enterprise – not ours**

Today’s Gospel tells the story of how Jesus did the work of His Enterprise, Himself. Then it tells us of how Jesus sent the disciples (His first staff) out and about to do that same work. Today, He still sends His disciples (US) out to do the same work.

I’m reminded of a story I read (**NOT** in the Bible) of Jesus’ arrival back in heaven after the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension:

The angels of heaven greeted Him and welcomed Him home enthusiastically. They asked Jesus what was the next phase of the Kingdom of God. And Jesus told them about setting up the Jesus Enterprise – known as “**JESUS INCORPORATED**” using the Disciples. The angels looked at Jesus in amazement and horror! “**WHAT?! The**

ones who denied You? The ones who ran away from You in Your hour of need? The ones who fell asleep in the garden when You asked them to pray? The ones who couldn't understand what You taught them about 88% of the time? You're saying that the whole Jesus Enterprise/ "**JESUS INCORPORATED**" depends on them. That's funny, Jesus. But really: what's PLAN B?"

And Jesus turned and looked at them, with all seriousness in His eyes, and said: "**There is NO Plan B. It either happens through them or it doesn't happen.**"

That's it, folks. **There is no Plan B.** The Kingdom of God/Jesus Enterprise will happen, **by God, THROUGH us humans, or not at all.**

And the crazy thing is that the Bible tells us that **Jesus said we humans would do greater works than did He.**

It might be comforting to see – in today's scripture – that there were times when Jesus' own best effort pretty much seemed like a bust. In fact, to quote from verse 6: "**He was amazed.**"

Sometimes it just doesn't work out. At least not in the moment, does it appear like it.

The Crucifixion – before we knew about the Resurrection – did not seem to be high on the list of successful ventures, did it?

So we realize that we don't always get to hit a home run. When we are commissioned and sent out to do the work of the Jesus Enterprise/Jesus Incorporated – we:

- ⌘ **Do what we can**
- ⌘ **Plant seeds**
- ⌘ **Be faithful**
- ⌘ **Trust God, not rely upon what seems to be the signs of success/failure**

I know that sometimes it seems like the people doing God's work around us – even the people who stare back at us in the mirror – don't quite seem "up to the task." But, there is no Plan B. In this moment, in this place, we are the best ones available to do the work of the Jesus Enterprise/Jesus Incorporated, because we are the ONLY ones here in this moment in time, in this place to do it.

It's up to us.

Sometimes -- when we accept this fact, and gird up our loins to do this holy work -- it will seem like we are not having a lot of success. Like Jesus (in verse 6) it might just amaze us at how poorly we are doing. Even when we pray and study the Bible and do what we hear Jesus telling us to do – even then it might seem amazing at how we appear to strike out.

But – in verse 11 – Jesus prepares us in His commissioning for this very thing:

**"If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them."**

[Come out of the pulpit and walk down the center aisle for the next few paragraphs in blue]

In our discussion of this passage in the Worship Committee, some people said that they were bothered by this verse. It seemed like Jesus was telling the people to make a passive aggressive liturgical act against the people. It just didn't seem very loving.

As we discussed it, it seemed that the key to understanding was in the phrase "as a testimony against them" –

did it refer to the foot shaking

OR

did the *testimony against them* refer to the dust itself.

In the first interpretation, the people are being told that THEY are being rejected.

In the latter interpretation, it is THEIR REJECTION that the disciples are shaking off.

In the living demonstration provided here – as persons from this congregation have shown by the imposition of these sticky strips on me – I can **walk away from their caustic comments**, from their acts of rejection – **but I STILL CARRY THE WEIGHT OF THEM**. I go from the town of rejection to the next place, **still carrying the weight with me**.

But when I shake it off – THIS is my testimony:

1. You don't drag me down. My worth is not based on your opinion.
2. I don't have to re-package the Gospel of Jesus Christ in order to fit it into some consumer friendly package in order to get you to believe it. The Good News is what it is; it's not dependent upon your acceptance
3. I don't need to feel instant gratification in order to know that I am succeeding. All things are done in God's time. I just need to keep on keeping on

That, my sisters and brothers, is a VERY IMPORTANT part of our commissioning, into the Jesus Enterprise today.

We need to listen and hear; we need to listen and learn. **It is just as SINFUL to be constantly TAKING offense as it is to be constantly GIVING offense.**

There are some people who simply are always being offended. Someone is always torquing them off. It seems like there is somebody who is always failing to live up to their expectations.

It's not just in the "towns" into which we travel. **It's also right here at home**. One of the most destructive things in the Jesus Enterprise is when non-believers look at how we act, not just what we say we believe, and they see a bunch of touchy people whose hurt feelings are always tearing at the fabric of the Church.

If people see folks in the Church/the Body of Christ/the Jesus Enterprise not liking one another, being bent out of shape, being PO'd (that means "Put Off") – then it's very easy for them to say: "If THAT is how the Love of Christ is lived out, I'd rather be a Buddhist, Muslim, Dog worshipper, etc.

In Jesus' commissioning, He makes it very, very clear, that we are NOT to get ourselves all worked up by other folks disagreeing with us, by not accepting the Gospel *as we understand it*.

**The Jesus Enterprise does NOT require unanimity or uniformity in order to have UNITY. If Christians can't get along, then how in the world do they expect anyone outside the Church to take Jesus seriously.**

When the Body of Christ gets TORN, it's because people are more concerned about their own "self-respect" than about Jesus.

- ⌘ If folks don't see it your way, then get over it. **Shake it off.**
- ⌘ If folks don't give you the respect you deserve, GROW UP. **Shake it off.**
- ⌘ If people say something that you find offensive, don't be so touchy. **Shake it off.**
- ⌘ QUIT WORSHIPPING YOUR NEED TO BE IN CONTROL and follow Jesus' teaching: **Shake it off and move on.**
- ⌘ **Let go of your own PRIDE and QUIT EMBARRASSING JESUS!**

**I heard the story of two monks who were walking along the road. They came to a small stream that had to be waded across. They saw a woman standing beside the river, all perplexed. She, also, needed to get to the other side, but was afraid to walk through the water. The first monk picked her up and carried her to the other side. The second monk forded the stream by himself. The first monk set her down on the other side. She went her way and the monks went their way. For the rest of the day, the second monk berated the first –**

*“You know we are not allowed to have physical contact with women. You know what temptations that can cause. You know how sinful that was. You know blah, blah, blah ....”*

**Finally, the first monk said, “My brother, I set the woman down five miles ago and have not been bothered by her. You did not touch her, but you have not let her go for the rest of this day. Which one of us is being hurt here?”**

When we take offense so easily and carry the insult with us, we are the ones who carry the burden, not the one who offended us.

**For the love of Christ – and certainly for His mission – shake it off and move along. Get over it and let it go. It is the Jesus way, you know.**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.