

Sermon Notes – July 7, 2024
The Holy Gospel of St. Mark 6:1-13
Peace Lutheran Church
“Receiver By Faith”

Jesus knows the world's rejection of the gospel is inevitable, and he knows this reality firsthand. In the Gospel of Mark, He's had a pretty good run up until now. He has healed people of paralysis, leprosy, a withered hand, demon possession, and hemorrhage. He's done some good preaching too, including lots of stories about seeds and how they are scattered. He's calmed a storm and brought a dead girl back to life.

But when Jesus comes home, He experiences a whiplash turn in public opinion. One minute the crowd is in awe of His wisdom. The next minute they are offended.

Jesus knows that His Good News always runs into resistance. Justice is not good news for the oppressor. Healing is not good news for those who would rather avoid “those people” and “their” problems. Grace is not good news to those who are more interested in keeping score. And we are all, at one time or another, those who are the oppressors or avoiders or scorekeepers. Sometimes we are among those rebellious stubborn people, about whom God warns Ezekiel.

It's not that this rejection was limited to Jesus. When Jesus sends out His disciples, He prepares them for it: “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that place [town]. 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” (Mark 6: 10-11). Jesus knows that for every time His followers are met with hospitality, there will also be a time they are met with hostility. Note that today's psalmist cries out for God's mercy, because the people are met up with the scorn and contempt of others (Ps. 123: 3-4).

That goes for us too. When we live as followers of Jesus, when we speak and act as people who embody inclusive love, we should not expect cheers and celebration. When we seek the justice to which Jesus calls us, people will not throw us a parade.

The disciples clearly experienced the power of proximity. When they were sent out with Jesus' authority, they were able to cast out demons and cure the sick. But they first had to meet and listen to the people who were possessed and in pain. They also had to practice moving past rejection. As Jesus had taught them, proximity demands perseverance.

Perhaps the most important part of Jesus' instruction to His disciples - then and now - is that we do not go out alone. Jesus sends out His disciples two-

by-two, a clear signal that we must stand with each other as we live as Christ-followers in a world that often has no use for the Christ we follow. When we travel together, we can cover more ground and survive the setbacks. And we are never, ever without the One who sends us, the One who gives us the power of proximity, the One who, again and again, offers the grace to sustain us.