**Pentecost 6: 4 July Mark 6:1-13 Shake off the dust**

The first few verses of Mark 6 not only show us how to start a movement but how to make sure it is successful. What are the kingdom factors that have led to Jesus and then his follows enabling an extension of God’s kingdom beyond the stifling restrictions of culture, tradition and wealth.

Just as in the clip Jesus was viewed by his relatives and those who knew him best as a bit of a contradiction – a wise miracle worker but then they wondered ‘how can this be?’ Isn’t he just a tekton (Gk) or tradesperson. (I’m not implying that there is anything wrong with being a carpenter here.) In fact elsewhere in Mark we learn that those closest to Him and the wise men of the town thought he was crazy.

In Mark Chapter 3: *Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”*

*And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”*

It’s a bit like the man who was the first ‘crazy’ in the video.

So Jesus moved on to the neighbouring villages.

Consider how radical this was. To leave the security of your family and neighbours, the economics of the time meant your relied on your kin. They were your eyes, your providers and protectors.

Certainly Mark is telling us something about Jesus which was also part of his instruction to others: there is a higher priority than family power and obligation. Family power which is meant to empower one to independent adulthood, frequently aborts the process, and becomes a source of oppression. There are many people who can identify with the experience of being reduced to ‘junior’, someone’s child and therefore no one in particular, whether by family systems or extended family or local communities and whether in outward reality or in the inward reality of the mind and memory. Some people’s salvation, liberation, therapy needs to consist in being set free from such shackles.

Again, reading back to Mark chapter 3 this becomes clearer what Jesus’ attitude was.

**‘Whoever does the will of God, that person is my brother and sister and mother’ (3:35).**

That may well mean leaving the natural family behind, a revolutionary thought.

No doubt his disciples moved with him. I imagine this was a part of the teaching/learning process. Teachers usually do a lot of explaining first. Jesus used parables. They saw him perform miracles, healing the sick, the possessed and releasing the oppressed. Now for the doing. What will they learn better by doing

***I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.*** Attributed to [Confucius](https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/confucius-quotes)

So often in your experience the teacher has then given you practice at doing. Whether it be a maths concept, an essay structure, a new way of looking at a text or picture. The disciples were given the opportunity to practice. – To do and therefore to understand. Let’s see what they understood.

He appears also to have asked his fellow travellers to share his ministry. He sent them to live as he lived, being hosted by sympathetic locals, living very simply (Mark says, with a staff and sandals.) They were to do as Jesus did: proclaiming the reign of God and living it by healings and exorcisms, setting the oppressed free. They were to be bearers of that kind of good news in word and deed.

They do go out to practice being in ministry. exorcising is specifically mentioned.

The passage says

“You may take along a walking stick. But don’t carry food or a traveling bag or any money. It’s all right to wear sandals, but don’t take along a change of clothes. When you are welcomed into a home, stay there until you leave that town. If any place won’t welcome you or listen to your message, leave and shake the dust from your feet as a warning to them.”

Why like this? (show stick and sandels) Surely ‘one of they Ford vans’ would assist the ministry and make it more sustainable. What’s to be learnt by travelling light in pairs.

Their lifestyle was also a statement in itself. It challenged the sedentary bases of power founded on land and family/kin. Jesus promoted a radically alternative set of values. The social dislocation which he challenged some to take upon themselves was a social and a political statement, because it called into question the dominant values of society which kept the poor poor.

Not in today’s passage, but later in the same chapter, the disciples return. What did they learn?

And poignantly the description of John the Baptist’s imprisonment and murder is in between.

Mark 6: 30 ***After the apostles returned to Jesus, they told him everything they had done and taught. 31But so many people were coming and going that Jesus and the apostles did not even have a chance to eat. Then Jesus said, “Let's go to a place where we can be alone and get some rest.”***

Remember it’s the second person, in this case the 12 disciples who are the brave ones. Without them there is no movement, it’s just one crazy person.

A very successful mission, now attracting crowds, too many in fact.

Very unsatisfying for us though – They told Him everything- but we don’t get a chance to learn what it was that they did and taught.

I’d like to think that the clues are in the short instruction about being welcomed, not overstaying your welcome and moving on by shaking the dust off your feet, whatever that means.

A couple of experiences that I have had and one that I share with Pam are hitchhiking and hosting long distance cyclists. In both you hone and practice trust. You also are open to random ideas that you must process and at the same time as you listen you learn the right to speak of your experiences and values. It’s an exercise on spreading diplomacy, respect and intercultural understanding. I’m not saying this is as brave as going out and casting out demons as the 12 did.

But what’s it mean to be ‘shaking the dust off your feet’. It is a term that means not only moving on physically after your welcome is going a bit cold but moving on mentally in that you don’t have malice or rejection of the people that you are now passing on from.

Mark links the story of Jesus' rejection with the sending out of his disciples as if to say: what happened to Jesus will happen to anybody who truly follows Jesus. When the gospel is being truly preached and enacted, you can count on conflict. Crisis, disagreement and rejection typify the world's response to Jesus.

How does Jesus handle rejection? How does he advise his followers to handle it?

Matthew 16:24, 25

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

How do we individually or as a congregation handle rejection in our internal and external interactions?

We were discussing, around the kitchen table with a visitor, using worn out words like ‘resilience’ and people not knowing what they are. Here’s a possible definition that might help in understanding shaking the dust off your feet.

“Resilience is accepting your new reality, even if it’s less good than the one you had before. You can fight it, you can do nothing but scream about what you’ve lost, or you can accept that and try to put together something that’s good.” ― Elizabeth Edwards

How do we handle rejection of the message and values of Jesus? A number of possibilities but the resilient option means–

Risking living out or speaking your values

Forgiving those who think we think are wrong or we think the same of them

Use each experience to improve the message. Maybe it’s as St Francis said – Preach the gospel and sometimes use words.

Maybe the saying shake the dust off your feet emanates from Proverbs

[Proverbs 4:23-27](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs%204%3A23&version=MSG) Keep vigilant watch over your heart; *that’s* where life starts. Don’t talk out of both sides of your mouth; avoid careless banter, white lies, and gossip. Keep your eyes straight ahead; ignore all sideshow distractions. Watch your step, and the road will stretch out smooth before you. Look neither right nor left; leave evil in the **dust**.

In other words, keep the main thing the main thing. In this passage it is learning from Jesus and practicing what he showed and preached.