

Scripture Study

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle B



Opening prayer

Amos 7:12-15

(Ps 85:9-14)

Ephesians 1:3-14

Mark 6:7-13

Overview of the Gospel:

- In last Sunday's Gospel reading, we heard that Jesus had not been able to perform many miracles in his hometown of Nazareth because of their unbelief (Mark 6:1-6). Verse six informed us that, "amazed at their lack of faith," he then went around the vicinity teaching.
- Jesus calls his twelve handpicked apostles (Mark 3:14-19), sending them (the word *apostle* means "one who is sent") to the surrounding Galilean villages (Matthew 10:5-6). In doing so, he gives them his own authority to do what he has been doing: healing the sick (Mark 5:25-34), casting out demons (Mark 5:1-20), and preaching the Gospel (Mark 6:1-2, 7).
- Jesus sends them out "two by two"—not only for safety and companionship, but in order to provide the testimony of two witnesses, as required by the Jewish law for life and death cases (Deuteronomy 19:6). At stake here is spiritual life or death.
- Palestinian Jews shook the dust from their sandals when leaving Gentile territory and reentering the Holy Land. It was a derogatory statement against pagan uncleanness. Jesus instructs them to do so (verse 11) to make the point that if they or the Gospel message were not welcomed in a certain place, they were to politely take their leave, with no recriminations.
- Anointing with oil (verse 13) was a symbol of healing and a medicinal agent in the ancient world (Isaiah 1:6; Luke 10:34). According to the Council of Trent, the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick was "instituted in Mark [6:13] and published in the Epistle of St. James" (James 5:14-15).

Questions:

- What did Jesus do before sending out his men (verse 7)? Why did he send them out two by two?
- What were the primary responsibilities that the disciples were tasked with? How is the disciple's message like that of John (Mark 1:4) and Jesus (Mark 1:14-15)? How is this foundational message of the Gospel (Mt 3:2, 4:17; Acts 2:37-38, 13:24)?
- What does the disciple's assignment tell you about the kingdom of God?
- Why do you think Jesus told them to take nothing more than the clothes on their backs?
- What warnings or encouragements would you need to hear from Jesus in order to go out and represent him?
- Where has God sent you to tell about his kingdom? How is it going?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 765, 1506, 1510-1511, 1673

Closing prayer

A man of prayer is capable of everything. Hence it is very important that missionaries dedicate themselves to this practice with great affection, because without it they will accomplish little or nothing, whereas through it, more than by letters or persuasive speech, they will be capable of touching hearts and winning souls to their Creator. -St. Vincent de Paul

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"They anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them"

Reading 1: Amos 7:12-15

Amaziah, priest of Bethel, said to Amos, "Off with you, visionary, flee to the land of Judah! There earn your bread by prophesying, but never again prophesy in Bethel; for it is the king's sanctuary and a royal temple." Amos answered Amaziah, "I was no prophet, nor have I belonged to a company of prophets; I was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamores. The LORD took me from following the flock, and said to me, Go, prophesy to my people Israel."

Gospel: Mark 6:7-13

And he called to him the twelve, and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. And he said to them, "Where you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. And if any place will not receive you and they refuse to hear you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them." So they went out and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them.



Meditation: What kind of authority and power does the Lord want you to exercise on his behalf? Jesus gave his apostles both the power and the authority to speak and to act in his name. He commanded them to do the works which he did – to heal, to free people from the power of the evil one, and to speak the word of God – the good news of the gospel which they received from Jesus. When Jesus spoke of power and authority he did something unheard of. He wedded power and authority with love and humility. The "world" and the "flesh" seek power for selfish gain. Jesus teaches us to use it for the good of our neighbor.

Why does Jesus tell the apostles to "travel light" with little or no provision? "Poverty of spirit" frees us from greed and preoccupation with possessions and makes ample room for God's provision. The Lord wants his disciples to be dependent on him and not on themselves. He wills to work through and in each of us for his glory. Are you ready to handle the

power and authority which God wishes you to exercise on his behalf? The Lord entrusts us with his gifts and talents. Are you eager to place yourself at his service, to do whatever he bids you, and to witness his truth and saving power to whomever he sends you?

"Lord Jesus, make me a channel of your grace and healing love that others may find life and freedom in you. Free me from all other attachments that I may joyfully pursue the things of heaven. May I witness the joy of the gospel both in word and deed."

Psalm 85:8-13

Let me hear what God the LORD will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints, to those who turn to him in their hearts. Surely his salvation is at hand for those who fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet; righteousness and peace will kiss each other. Faithfulness will spring up from the ground, and righteousness will look down from the sky. Yea, the LORD will give what is good, and our land will yield its increase. Righteousness will go before him, and make his footsteps a way.

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