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SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

JESUS SHARES HIS MINISTRY

(Lesson for December 14)
Mark 6:6-13; 30-41

GOLDEN TEXT — And Jesus

... was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd. — Mark 6:34

THE LESSON AS A WHOLE

Approach to the Lesson

When a man shares apples with a friend he has fewer apples left for himself. But when our Lord shared His ministry with His disciples, He did not deprive Himself of any power or authority. His sharing was spiritual, not arithmetical.

He shared His work with the Twelve. The needs of the area were vast. Teams of dedicated men could reach the crowds in greater numbers and more efficiently than one person alone.

Moreover, the disciples needed training in the work of God while their Saviour was still in their midst. He was grooming them, coaching them, preparing them for the days when He would be with the Father in Heaven and they would be left to carry on the task without His visible presence and counsel.

He shared His wisdom with them. The equipment they needed, the strategy they should employ, the response they would meet, the conduct they should display—all this formed a part of the divine instructions He gave them.

He shared His power, too — Mark 6:7. This does not mean that His own power was diminished. He is forever the Son of God. He simply gave His disciples authority in His name to perform miracles that would attest the truth of their message.

He shared His presence with them (Mark 6:30, 31). When their journeys were ended, they gathered with their Lord for a season of fellowship and rest. They reported the message they had delivered, the miracles they had performed, and other experiences along the way. The thronging crowds were hard at their heels. But the Saviour tenderly drew them aside to the desert to refresh their tired bodies and spirits with the blessedness of His fellowship and encouragement.

And then when the hordes once more pressed upon them, Christ was moved with pity

(Mark 6:34). He told the disciples to divide the 5,000 into rows. Then He shared with the Twelve the loaves and fishes, which they distributed to the hungry host. The Lord Jesus was concerned not only that the crowds be fed but that they be fed for the mission of the miracle, share His compassion for weary, hungry, shepherdless souls.

Verse by Verse

Mark 6:6—"He went round about the villages, teaching. The itinerant ministry of Christ set the stage for the mission of His disciples. He set them an example. His personal experiences as well as His divine wisdom underlay His instructions to the Twelve.

Verse 7—"He called . . . the twelve, and began to send them forth by twos and twos . . . gave them power over unclean spirits." The "twelve" becomes almost a formal title for the disciples. They were called on by name, and for a doubly attested witness, and for fellowship. "Power" is authority in the Greek.

Verse 8—"And commanded them . . . take nothing for their journey, save a staff only; no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse." Their mission was urgent. They must not be impeded by excessive equipment. The people to whom they witnessed would supply their needs.

Verse 9—"Be shod with sandals; and not put on two coats." The disciples' renunciation was not to go to extremes: our Lord was not organizing a barefoot sect. The men could wear sandals, peasants' shoes. They were allotted one coat, adequate for comfort. A second would be an unnecessary luxury.

Verse 10—"He said . . . In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide . . . The disciples were not to be restlessly roaming abroad. Their effort was to be concentrated and stabilized.

Verse 11—"Whatsoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart . . . shake off the dust under your feet." It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment . . . Our Lord knew that the Gospel message is divisive; some would reject it. Shaking off the dust was a sign of indignation and repudiation (see Acts 13:51). The Jews often shook off (as an act of contempt) Gentile dust they had picked up. The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were notorious instances of infamy — Gen. 19:1-28; they rejected Lot's testimony and were annihilated. How much greater will be the condemnation of those who spurn the messengers of the Son of God!

Verse 12—"And they went out, and preached that men should repent." Repentance, an initial condition of entry into the Kingdom, was the theme of the preaching of John the Baptist and of Christ at the inception of His ministry. It means a change of mental and spiritual direction. It is no substitute for saving faith, but a concomitant of such faith (see Acts 20:21).

Verse 13—"They cast out many devils and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them." The disciples used their divinely received authority. Demons obeyed their commands because Christ was the disciples' commander. Disease was conquered because Christ is the Great Physician. Anointing with oil had medicinal value in some instances (see Luke 10:34); was an encouragement to faith; and was occasionally practiced in the first century church (Jas. 5:14).

The Heart of the Lesson
The work of God moves forward as men of vision, power, and compassion transmit the flame of their devotion to others. The Lord Jesus set the pattern. The Apostle Paul followed it when he first trained young Timothy, and finally instructed him to commit to "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" the things which he had himself learned from Paul (2 Tim. 2:2).

The lessons taught by Christ as He shared His ministry with the Twelve need renewed emphasis.

First, the sense of urgency that must impel ambassadors as they preach the Gospel. Physical equipment is necessary, but not to be overemphasized. Two coats may bring more comfort; but some of the time spent in selecting the extra coat, cleaning and repairing it, might be used in witnessing for the Saviour. The day of grace will swiftly end, and the hour of judgment dawn. The time is short.

Second, a divided response is to be expected. The "preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18). The Sodom and Gomorrah of rejection and judgment still exist. The disciples' task is faithfully to present his message, not to be disheartened when sinners spurn it, to rejoice when men welcome it, and to leave the eternal issues with God.

Third, Christ whom they represent is all powerful. His delegated authority is irresistible. It is a thrill to know that the omnipotent Son of God is one's sponsor and friend.

Fourth, the personal presence of the Saviour is a vital and rewarding reality. As the disciples reported to their Lord, shared their experiences, and entered into joyous fellowship with Him, so His faithful witnesses today may find in Him their divine stay, solace, and rest. "Let us abide with you always" (Matt. 28:20) is forever true. He will never forsake His own.

Fifth, the desperate need of a spiritually hungry and sin-sick

Simple Safety Measures Can Cut Childrens Accidents

It may not take more than a

little elbow grease and a second thought to prevent a serious accident in the home. But many parents neglect doing the small things here and there that will make their homes safer.

Many a youngster has been burned by tampering with electric outlets that lie right in the path of crawler and toddler. Yet, there are plastic caps that cost but a few cents that may be inserted into these outlets in a jiffy and removed when the outlet is put into use.

Windows are another potential danger in the home, especially when they do not lock properly or when the screens offer little protection to curious small fry. It takes only a few minutes to anchor screens firmly with proper hardware, so that they will act as barriers.

Rustic fences are lovely to look at, but those with pointed tops may serve as a real danger to a child who is at the climbing

world must have the priority over our own repose. When the crowds beckoned, the disciples' desert rest ended.

Sixth, feeding needy people with the everlasting Bread of God requires efficiency and order (the ranks of hundreds and fifties). It must be undergirded with prayer: Christ "looked up to heaven" (Mark 6:41) before He broke the loaves. It is a cooperative effort; believers sharing with fellow believers in a corporate effort. And the results? The fullness of satisfaction, peace, and joy on the part of those whose souls have tasted of the Bread from Heaven.

One slip from his perch on an unsteady wagon or tricycle as he leans over a fence, could cause a serious injury, perhaps the loss of an eye. Arms and legs may be filled with splinters, too, unless a coat of shellac or varnish is put over rough wood to seal it and prevent weathering.

The popular home workshop is another potential danger being stressed these days with the argument that "emergencies do not wait." Power tool experts suggest building a five-foot wall of beaverboard around the home workshop.

Prevents Falls— They suggest installing a gate that locks to keep children away from saws, chisels, and especially power tools.

A rickety high-chair may get better support by enlarging the base of it so the child can't overturn it by rocking.

Falls may be prevented by installing hand rails on stairways, by putting a rubber pad under scatter rugs, by putting grab rails next to the bathtub and installing light switches at stairways and at the entrances to rooms. Sand chest near outdoor steps and walks will come in handy when ice forms and the area requires sanding.

Fire may be avoided by keeping chimneys clean. A burlap bag filled with straw, weighted with a brick may be lowered and raised inside the chimney from the roof until sooty residue is removed. A dry Christmas tree thrown into a fireplace is a frequent cause of chimney fires.

Buy Extinguishers
Walls and ceilings surround-

ing the furnace should be covered with fireproof material. Fire extinguishers should be available readily in the house with one kept within range of the kitchen stove.
If you are planning to insulate your home, choose a non-burnable type of insulation. The material will serve as a partial fire barrier, preventing flash fires that race along the air spaces inside walls of non-insulated homes.

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