

## Goal for Today...Faith

July 8, 2012

Mark 6: 1-13

*1 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. 2 When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles! 3 Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. 4 Jesus said to them, "Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor." 5 He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them.*

*6 And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. 7 Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. 8 These were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff--no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. 9 Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. 10 Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them." 12 They went out and preached that people should repent. 13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.*

I need to make amends to Maggie this morning. Saturday June 30, 2012, Saturday of last week was our 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I had meant to announce it last Sunday and just forgot to do so. So Maggie, I'm sorry, and congregation, Maggie and I had a wonderful day together celebrating. I didn't forget our anniversary, I just forgot to announce it during joys and concerns. I say all this for a reason. I am extremely lucky to have Maggie by my side. She is very supportive in the majority of my endeavors. Occasionally, mind you, just occasionally, I may come up with some hair-brained idea, and she will have to reign me in. And when this happens, and it's not very often, mind you, but occasionally when it does, she will look at me, cock her head slightly to one side and say, have you lost your ever-loving mind! And being the bright boy that I am, I automatically wonder to myself, wow, did I explain that right? Let me try that a different way. No, in all seriousness I will say Maggie is very, very, supportive of me. She wants me to be successful in whatever I undertake. And in the same token, I want her to be just as successful in all her endeavors as well. Because of this mutual respect and love we have for each other, we spend a good deal of time talking with each other about what we are doing, or are thinking about doing. Case in point: when I began to think about throwing my hat into the ring to become the interim minister here, I sat down with Maggie and we had several discussions about what it meant to me, what it meant to her, what it would mean to us, and what it would mean to this church. We talked about how it would affect us as individuals and as a couple. Once we had thoroughly discussed everything, I presented my offer to the Transition Team. Maggie has been very supportive of me over the last five months. As I work on my sermons, I give them to her to read, to get her take on them. Occasionally, she offers me constructive feedback. Sometimes I take it, and sometimes I don't. This past Monday, we were talking and she asked me if I realized that my last three or four sermons had all had the same basic theme. She went on to explain that the messages and the examples I had used were all different, but still the basic theme was the same. We talked about her question for several minutes, why she had asked it, what she thought the basic theme was, and my responses to the question. And by the way, she was right, I had used the same basic theme and it was on purpose. Now, I'm going to pose that question to you, what was the basic theme of those sermons?

This morning we are still in the Gospel of Mark, and once again we get two stories in one passage. Jesus has been in Capernaum preaching and healing. Everywhere he goes there are crowds. He is unable to get any peace or rest. We talked one morning several Sundays ago about it being so crowded in the house where he was staying, he couldn't even sit down to eat. He needed a break. Remember, he was a human at that time. So he took the disciples and went to Nazareth. He went home to see his family and get some rest. I guess you could

say he needed a vacation. But when Sunday came, unlike a lot of us, myself included, even on vacation, Jesus went to the Synagogue. In Jesus time, if you had a visiting rabbi or teacher, it was common practice to give them the opportunity to speak, and Jesus was given the opportunity. And speak he did.

In verse two we read, **and many who heard him were amazed. “Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?** Jesus was delivering the same message that morning, as he had in Capernaum and the surrounding area; the same message that had drawn the huge crowds he was trying to get a break from. Remember, Jesus came home to get a break from the crowds, to get some rest. I told you several weeks ago that Nazareth was a small town of around two hundred or so people. These were the people he had grown up with, the people who knew him and his family. As they listened to him, they began to remember who he was and all of a sudden he wasn’t as learned. Listen to verse three **Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.** When I was in college taking one of my methods in education courses, one of my professors told the class not to go back to the high school we graduated from to get our first teaching job. They know you there. They watched you grow up, they saw you as a student. You may have family there who will know you as cousin or maybe even as your brother or sister. Some of the teachers will even remember you as a student and will have trouble accepting you as a peer. They will have trouble accepting you as a person of authority. The Methodists have the same philosophy with their ministers. They won’t send a new minister into the church where they grew up. I’ve been told they would wait at least twenty years before sending someone back to their home church. Maggie has three brothers, Bill, Rob, and Greg. As she and I first started dating and I began to meet her family I got to know the boys. We would go to West Virginia at Christmas or for other family get together’s and I would watch the boys interact with each other. They would cut-up and carry on like brothers do. Rob is an analytical chemist, Greg works in the golf industry, and Bill, well, Bill is a Methodist minister. It was a good while before I knew that. I got to know him as Maggie’s brother, not as a preacher. I’ve never heard him preach, and to be quite honest, I’m not sure I will ever really see him as Reverend Haynes. He will always be Maggie’s brother. I think this situation is similar to what happened to Jesus. Over the past several weeks, we have watched Jesus do some pretty amazing things. We saw him calm the seas, he raised Jarius’ daughter from the dead, and he healed the woman with the bleeding disorder. In the first and second chapter of Mark, we read about Jesus driving out evil spirits, healing a man with leprosy, and healing a paralytic. Now here he was at home where everyone knew him and they had no faith in him. Listen to verses five and six; <sup>5</sup>**He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. <sup>6</sup>He was amazed at their lack of faith.** The people of Nazareth knew Jesus too well, he would always be Mary’s boy. For the most part, as far as the people of Nazareth were concerned, he would never be seen as the Messiah.

So what did Jesus do? This is the second story in today’s scripture lesson. Jesus went to the neighboring villages and preached and taught. In these villages, he obviously was better received. He also sent his disciples out to do the same. At this time, Jesus gave the disciples the ability to heal, to drive out evil spirits. Listen to verses eight thru eleven: **These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. <sup>9</sup>Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. <sup>10</sup>Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. <sup>11</sup>And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”** Now when we talk about the disciples in the Gospel of Mark, you’ve got to remember that this gospel is not kind to the disciples. Time and time again, they ask stupid questions, they get their assignments wrong, at times, they actually became scared of Jesus. Jesus even used harsh words with them. But in the scripture lesson this morning, Jesus simply gives them their charge: they are to go out two by two, anoint with oil, and heal. He knows that he has the ability to do this himself, he’s done it before and he knows he has authority from God to do so. But this time, he delegates this authority to this small band of wayward, uneducated men. But before he sends them out, Jesus gives them

some guidance, some basic principles; Go out in pairs, both for protection and for mutual building up. If you're in pairs, you can testify for each other and watch each other's back. Travel light, live simply. You don't need to take a bunch of stuff with you, God will provide for you. Stay in the first place you come to – don't look for the finest house to stay in. Stay until you've done what you've come to do. Preach, heal, and spread the good news. If they don't listen, don't worry – just move on. And so they did.

In the first couple of minutes of today's message, I asked you a question about the basic theme of my recent sermons. I didn't wait for an answer or give you one; I just jumped directly into today's message. Now I'm ready to go back to the question; what was the basic theme of those sermons, and of today's sermon? Here's a hint: What is the title of today's sermon?

### **Goal for Today...Faith**

Faith; I'm not going to give you definitions, or read you scripture quotes on faith. I'm just going to point out what I think is the major theme in today's scripture lesson. Several years ago, I think starting in 2001, authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins wrote a series of fictional books on the rapture and what happened to the world afterward. The first book was called *Left Behind* and the series of sixteen books became known as the *Left Behind* series. I read the first two or three and they became very same-ish to me, so I didn't read any more of them. The basic premise of the book was at the end of the world, all who believed in Jesus Christ were taken instantly to heaven and all who didn't were left behind on earth to fend for themselves. I don't necessarily believe this is how the world will end. Actually, none of us know how or when that will happen. We don't know whether it will be one huge cataclysmic event or if it is when each of us individually pass away that our world ceases to exist. We don't know and I don't think we need to know. But, here in today's scripture, Mark is holding up the mirror again for us to look in. Jesus presented himself to the people of Nazareth. They had no faith, so he went to other villages teaching and healing. He also sent his disciples out to do the same. Listen closely to verse eleven: **And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.**

Jesus Christ presents himself to each of us daily. Each one of us has the free will to accept him or not. If we don't accept him, I think the *Left Behind* series may become more fact than fiction. If we don't accept him, he will leave us; he will shake the dust off his feet as a testimony against us. In the Gospel of John 14:6 we read; **Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life.** And in Mark 5: 36 we read, **Don't be afraid, just believe.** Faith, that is the basic theme for the past month. Faith, that's the goal for today. Faith, it needs to be to goal for the rest of your life. Don't turn fiction into reality, don't be left behind. Jesus Christ promised salvation to each of us who believe in him, to each of us who have faith.

Amen