

## Simple Messengers

Mark 6:1-13

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, July 5, 2015

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Jesus is exalted in our art. Jesus is exalted in our movies, at least the ones who confess Him as Christ. But even the movies and shows that do not confess Him as Christ exalt Him because they deem Him worthy of having a show or movie made about Him at all. Jesus is exalted in our songs and in our liturgy. Jesus is exalted in our hearts and in our minds. And well He should be. He is risen from the dead. Because He is risen from the dead, He is our Lord and Savior. He has saved us from sin and death.

And Jesus is also a guy.

He is a man from Nazareth. He has a home town the same as anybody. He has a mother and father. You and I know that Joseph is not the father of our Lord, but how many of you have families where the head of the household is not the father of all of the children in the household even though everyone in town assumes that he is the father of all of children. Our Lord's family is no different. He has brothers. Even we now know their names, James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon. He had sisters. He must have had a domestic life much like anyone else in Nazareth before He was baptized by John. Most people assume that our Lord engaged in carpentry like Joseph until His baptism. Later research has shown that Joseph was more likely a stone mason, but nevertheless a builder of some kind. Our Lord would have worked with His hands. He would have gone to synagogue like everyone else. He would have been bar mitzvahed at the local synagogue. There is no mention in the Gospels that He ever preached before His baptism. We can only guess about His temperament. Our Lord does demonstrate that it is possible to be an ordinary person and still not sin.

Even when He leaves Nazareth, He is ordinary looking. The Gospels don't bother to describe His appearance. The Old Testament tells us that Joseph was beautiful, but the Gospels do not say the same thing about our Lord. When He went to John the Baptist to be baptized He would have appeared as just one more sinner getting into the Jordan River confessing His sins.

In spite of the fact that our Lord performed miracles, He walked everywhere. He called His disciples by going up to them and telling them to follow Him. While He performed miracles He did not perform them all of the time. While our Lord fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fish, He and His apostles also kept a treasury out of which they funded their ministry. It was primarily women who gave donations to His ministry and the ministry of the apostles. We know these facts from the Gospels. That means that our Lord and His apostles in spite of His miraculous abilities were buying food the same as everyone else. In fact in John 4 it states that the apostles went into a town to purchase food.

I don't know where these men slept. I assume that they camped out sometimes and that sometimes someone offered them their home to stay in. Hospitality to strangers was more commonly practiced in those days.

He is an ordinary man and like all ordinary men, He has a past. Our Lord does not have a sinful past such as we do, but He has a history like the rest of us. And when He goes to His home town, He goes home to people who treat Him as if He is still the boy who grew up there.

They cannot seem to understand why He would receive such wisdom and not them. They cannot seem to understand the reports that they have heard about the miracles that He performed. After all He did not do any when He was young. He gave no indication to them that He was special when He was young. And you can't count the whole thing in the temple that happened in Jerusalem and we are not

aware of how much our Lord's extended family knew of that incident given that only Joseph and Mary went back to look for Him.

To them He is just some kid now grown up and who does He think He is to speak with wisdom and perform miracles? And if our Lord had answered that question it would have only given them more reason to condemn Him. And I believe the reason that He could not heal people because of their lack of faith is because they would not have even bothered to come to Jesus for healing if they did not believe.

And yet this ordinary kid from Nazareth now grown up is the One who heals the sick, who casts out the demons, who forgives sins, and raises the dead.

The apostles are no better.

Not only do they come from their own backgrounds with their own hometowns, they are unschooled, illiterate men for the most part. Matthew does some reading and writing and figuring for tax collecting. Judas had some kind of education according to some interpreters. But the rest of them are illiterate. The Sanhedrin in the book of Acts is amazed at these illiterate men preaching about Jesus. That means that Peter's letters in the New Testament were taken down by dictation. Mark's Gospel was taken from Peter by dictation. Mark could write. The holy and blessed apostle could not.

They too like Jesus had a background in a trade. Most of them were fishermen. Simon the zealot was a political activist before He started following Jesus around. Matthew's background would have been stacked against him no matter where he went. Once they found out he had been a tax collector, what would they have done to him?

Then on top of everything, Jesus sends them out without bread, without a knapsack for traveling, without any money in their belts. He permits them only a staff. He tells them that when they enter a town remain in a household in the town until they leave.

It was practice in the ancient world that some people would house itinerant preachers in their homes. They would provide these preachers with food and shelter for as long as they were in the town. Therefore Jesus is making His apostles like other itinerant preachers. They are beggars who depend on the generosity of the people in the town where they will preach. If a place does not receive them, the only recourse they have is to shake the dust off of their feet and leave for the next place. If they do not eat, they do not eat.

So here go these itinerant, illiterate, people with backgrounds of their own to preach about Jesus. And the worst part of all of it is that they are sinners. Each and every one of them is a sinner. That is the difference between them and their Lord. If the people who listen to these men want to they may research the background of the apostles and find out their sins. They may investigate where they came from and go there and interview people and find out what the sins of their youth were. But why go through such trouble? I am certain that the apostles committed plenty of sins while they were in the villages to which Jesus had sent them.

So here they are, beggars, illiterate, itinerant, sinners. And they cast out unclean spirits. They heal the sick by anointing them with oil. They preach the good news about Jesus. They raise the dead.

And how does the apostolic preaching come to you?

The apostolic preaching comes to you through a preacher. Pastors are not apostles. Pastors do not have the authority to write Scripture. Pastors merely confess and preach and teach what the apostles committed to them. They may be more educated than the apostles were, but they are educated in what the apostle wrote or had written. And pastors have backgrounds also just like everyone else including our Lord. They have a hometown. And when pastors go to their hometown the people there treat them

just like they did before the pastor became a pastor. Since pastors work away from their hometowns for the most part, the people there do not see them as pastors, but as they were when they were growing up. The difference between our Lord and pastors is that pastors are sinners. Pastors have a past and pastors commit sins in the congregations where they are serving. Some of those sins remain unknown. Some of those sins are known. Some of those sins the congregation is gracious enough to overlook and some of those sins need correction.

In spite of all of this the pastor still bears you the word of God. He still preaches the apostolic doctrines. He still tells you about Jesus and what He has done and is doing for you.

And from where does the pastor get the apostolic doctrines? He gets them from the Bible.

The Bible in many ways is a book just like other books. It has pages and binding. You can burn it and God will not strike you dead when you do. It has words printed on the pages the same as other books.

The Bible may be a little unique in that it is a collection of several different kinds of documents. It has in it books of history, prophecy, biography, and correspondence between the apostles and congregations. But there are other books that are collections of documents, maybe not as varied as the Bible and maybe not covering as long a period of time as the Bible, but collections of documents none the less.

Many accuse the Bible of having error. Many try to assert that scientific discoveries have proven that the Bible's worldview is in error. Many even claim that the Bible's documents have other documents behind them and they use this hypothesis to prove that some parts of the Bible contradict other parts of the Bible thereby making the Bible an unreliable source on anything except maybe the religious opinions of ancient people. These people go on TV with their documentaries. They publish books asserting their opinions. And the Bible makes no reply. It makes no defense. The Bible apparently believes that it does not need a defense. It continues to assert what it asserts. And I suppose the fact that the Bible can generate such opposition is proof of its power. If the book were powerless, no one would fear it and therefore no one would oppose it.

The biggest chance the Bible takes is that it is a book. It is like other books. One does not have to read it. Furthermore the Bible compounds the problem by making some of its parts boring to human readers. Why doesn't it publish updates? Books can be ignored. They don't have to be read. *Moby Dick* can sit on the shelf right alongside the Bible and both can collect dust.

In spite of the criticisms that have been leveled against the Bible, it continues to say what it says. The Bible doesn't care that people criticize it. It continues to assert that the miraculous happens chief among them the resurrection from the dead of our Lord Jesus Christ. It continues to assert that God performed miracles through His prophets and apostles. It continues to assert that our Lord Jesus Christ did the miracles that He did. And most importantly the Bible continues to bring to us the apostolic doctrines.

At the very beginning of the Christian Church, the believers devoted themselves to the apostolic doctrines. They did it by finding an apostle and listening to him teach them. The apostles taught them about Jesus. They taught them about repentance and forgiveness. They taught them about the Holy Spirit. They taught them about the resurrection and life everlasting.

The apostles are now dead. The blessing that they left us was a written record of their doctrines. It is what we call the New Testament. And since our Lord and His apostles considered the Old Testament to be an authoritative word of God, the Bible includes it as well. The Bible is our access to the apostles' doctrines. Without it unless God provided some other way for us to have access to the apostles we would

have no knowledge of Christ and His resurrection. We would have no knowledge of the forgiveness of our sins or of everlasting life. We would never repent and turn to God and be saved.

And so the Bible is an ordinary book. It does not look like much when you consider it. The pastor is an ordinary person. Do not let the vestments of the Church fool you. But written in a book which was written by sinners and preached by a man who is a sinner are the apostolic doctrines. And these doctrines heal the sick, cast out demons, forgive sins and raise the dead.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.