

Jesus' Mission

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Mark 6:1-13

Psalm 11:3 | “when the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

So, there's a phrase that we use when someone is moving with purpose and speed, isn't there? We say, 'they're on a mission'. And you might say it about someone marching into Tesco with a shopping list and a determined look, because they've been given the list (that's certainly me when Dan gives me a shopping list). Or, maybe, it might be a parent who's heading into their child's bedroom to find out who's eaten that last biscuit. Or, I actually think of my dog, Henry, when he spots a squirrel in our garden. He is 'on a mission' to get it (he's never caught a squirrel, they're much too smart for him).

But when someone is on a mission, they're focused, aren't they? They know what they're about and they're not easily distracted. And this is what I love about this reading today. We see Jesus on a mission. Not just wandering around Galilee for a bit of fresh air. Not just gathering a fan club, or doing the odd miracle to keep people impressed.

Here, **Jesus here is on a mission from God**. A mission of **love**; a mission of **healing**; a mission of **hope**; a mission to **announce that God's kingdom has come near**.

He's on a mission. And in this passage today, something extraordinary happens. Jesus doesn't just *do* the mission - he *shares* the mission. He brings others into it, and he hands the baton to ordinary people, and he sends out a team.

So, today I really want to look at what this reading really means. Our reading begins with what might be called one of the most emotionally complicated places in the whole gospel. We begin with:

Mark 6:1 | ¹“Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples.”

This is Nazareth, the place where Jesus grew up; the place where people remember him as Mary's boy; the place where Nathaniel asked in John's gospel, “‘can anything good come from Nazareth?’” (John 1:46). This is basically the ancient equivalent of ‘nothing exciting ever happens around here.’

And Jesus goes into the synagogue, and he starts teaching. And at first people are amazed:

Mark 6:2 | ²“What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?”

You could say, ‘so far so good,’ couldn't you? He's doing well. But then something shifts. They stop listening with open hearts and start analysing with closed minds:

Mark 6:3 | 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 offence at him.”

In other words, they're saying, 'we know who you are. We know your background. We remember when you were in short trousers. You're not special. You're not impressive. You're just like, well, you're just you.'

Mark tells us they took offense at him. The people who should have been most open to Jesus, the people that knew him best, were the ones who were most resistant to him. And Jesus responds with one of the saddest and most honest lines:

Mark 6:4 | ⁴“A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.”

In other words, it's hard to be heard by people who think they already know you. And then in verse 5:

Mark 6:5-6 | ⁵“He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few people who were ill and heal them. ⁶ He was amazed at their lack of faith.”

So, to be clear, it's not that Jesus suddenly lost his power, but rather that their closed hearts limited what they were willing to receive. So, right at the start of this passage, we learn something vital about Jesus's mission. **God's mission doesn't always look like instant success.** Faithfulness does not always guarantee popularity, and obedience does not always bring applause. Even Jesus faced rejection. Even Jesus was misunderstood. Even Jesus was dismissed. And if that's true for him, it will sometimes be true for us as well.

And it is easy for us to feel the weight of rejection and of misunderstanding. But notice this: **Jesus doesn't sulk. He doesn't quit.** He doesn't say, 'well, that didn't work, so I'm back off to heaven.'

Verse 6 says:

Mark 6:6 | ⁶“Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village.”

He carried on. He keeps going. He stays on the mission, and he moves forward. And then comes the moment that changes everything:

Mark 6:7 | ⁷“Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.”

This is huge. This is huge news. Up until now, the disciples have been watching, they've been listening, they've been learning. They've been occasionally messing things up in quite impressive ways.

But now, Jesus is saying, 'right, now it's your turn.' And he doesn't send them out alone. He doesn't send them off on a one-man mission. He sends them two by two. **Because mission is not a solo sport.** It's not meant to be lonely. It's not meant to be heroic. Mission is meant to be shared, supported, encouraged.

And then he gives them something extraordinary: *authority over impure spirits*. So, in other words, what he's saying here is: 'you're not just representing me - **you're carrying my power, and you're stepping into my work.**'

This is not 'good luck, I hope it goes well. Send me a text and let me know how it's going.' That's not what he's saying here. Jesus is saying, 'I am with you, my spirit is in you, and my authority goes over you and ahead of you.'

And then Jesus gives them what might be the strangest packing list in history:

Mark 6:8-9 | 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 shirt.’”

That sends me into a little bit of a panic, to be honest. There's no suitcase; there's no snacks; there's no spare clothes; there's no emergency fund. If that was any of us, I'm sure that we would be panicking, and we'd be google searching the nearest *Premier Inn*. Let's be honest, we'd take every precaution.

So, why would Jesus do this? Because he's teaching them something essential about mission. **Mission is not about independence - it's about 'God-dependence.'** Mission is not about having everything worked out for us - it's about trusting God to provide for us as we go mission. It's not about being impressive, mission is about being available.

Jesus is saying, 'Go light, travel simply and trust deeply go light, travel simply and trust deeply.

And then he says:

Mark 6:10 | ¹⁰ “Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.”

In other words, don't chase comfort. Don't hunt for upgrades, because the place that you're staying is not actually as you would like it to be. And don't move on the moment things feel awkward. Jesus is saying, **mission is all about staying**. Stay put. Build relationships with people. Eat what's put in front of you with a smile on your face. But most importantly, be present. Be present in the moment. Mission is not about drive-by spirituality. It's about rooted love.

And then comes another very honest instruction.

Mark 6:11 | ¹¹“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 is telling the disciples and us that **not everyone will say ‘yes’ to what we have to say**. Not everyone will be open. And not everyone will welcome you. But that doesn't mean that we've failed. Sometimes the most faithful thing that we can do is to know when to move on. You don't have to argue with everyone. You don't have to carry every rejection. And you don't have to eternalize every closed door. You can shake the dust off your feet and you can keep going because the mission of the kingdom of God is bigger than just one response.

And here's the bit that I love the most about this passage:

Mark 6:13 | ¹³They drove out many demons and anointed with oil many people who were ill and healed them.

I think that's wonderful! They went out and they just did the thing they were told to do. They didn't just attend a training course about mission. They didn't just read a book about evangelism. And, you know what? Shocking as this sounds - they didn't form a committee to discuss the possibility of future outreach. They just went and did it. There were no evening meetings for them. They just went out, and they did it. They went, and God moved. Ordinary people. Unpolished people. People still figuring it out. Just, people. They did it.

And through them, demons were driven out. Sick people were healed. Lives were changed, and God's kingdom came near. Shouldn't we be learning something from that? Because it tells us something deeply encouraging: **God doesn't wait until we're perfect before he uses us**. God doesn't wait until we're fully confident before he sends us. And God doesn't wait until we have all the answers before he calls us. He sends willing people. He sends available people. And he sends trusting people. And then he works through them.

So, what does this mean for all of us? Now it's all very well saying 'well, that's nice for the disciples, but what about now? What about here? What about Weston? What about Bath? What about our streets, our workplaces, our families, our schools, our cafes, our gazillion WhatsApp groups that we're on?' What does Jesus' mission look like in February 2026?

Well, I've been thinking about this, and this is what I think. I think first it means that remembering that Jesus is still on a mission. He's not retired, folks. He's not gone quiet, and he has not lost interest in this world. This world that we live in now.

- Jesus is *still* seeking the lost.
- Jesus is *still* healing the broken.
- Jesus is *still* welcoming the outsider.
- Jesus is *still* forgiving the guilty.
- Jesus is *still* restoring the weary.

I know that I felt weary the last few weeks, and I know he's restoring me. The mission of God did not end in Mark chapter 6, because it continues in us each one of us so.

Secondly, it means that realising that **Jesus sends us he sends us too**. Not just the vicars. Not just the clergy. Not just the churchy people. But **every follower of Jesus is a sent person**. We are sent into our workplaces. We are sent into our families. We are sent into our streets that we live on. We are sent into our community. Our presence is not an accident: we are in those places for a purpose.

A mission doesn't have to look dramatic or loud. Sometimes mission looks like listening well to someone who's lonely. Praying quietly and privately for a friend or a colleague who's struggling. Sometimes it can look like showing kindness when it would be easier to be impatient with somebody. It's offering hope when someone feels stuck. It's speaking about your faith in a moment that is right. It's inviting somebody to church, to *Alpha* for a coffee, or for a conversation. The small acts make a big difference, because small acts lead to big love and small acts and big love leads into everyday faithfulness.

Thirdly, it means trusting God more than our own resources. We live in a culture that says that 'we need to be prepared, be secure, and be totally in control.' But Jesus turns that right upside down. He says, 'trust me, step out and rely on God.' We don't need to be in control of everything. And that doesn't mean being reckless in our lives, but it does mean being brave. It means being willing to pray for someone, even if it feels a little bit awkward.

Because maybe you might be in *Tesco*. It means being willing to talk about Jesus even if your voice shakes. And it means being willing to try something new even if it might fail. Because **God's power shows up best when we know that we don't have it all together.**

And fourthly, it means not being crushed by rejection. Some people will say 'yes,' and some people will say 'no.' And some people will smile quite politely, and then they'll change the subject. And that's okay. Because even Jesus was rejected. Even Jesus was misunderstood and even Jesus was dismissed. Our job is not to control the response. Our job is to be faithful to the call that God has called us to. Our job is to shake off our feet and just to keep going.

And here's where it gets even more exciting, because Mark 6 is not a one-off moment. It's not Jesus saying, 'Right, I'll try this once and see how it goes.' It's a preview. It's a practice run, and a rehearsal for something much bigger. Because if we fast forward to the very end of Matthew's gospel: Jesus has been crucified, he has risen from the dead, he has defeated sin and death. He stands before his disciples - the same slightly confused, slightly brave, still not-perfect group of people.

And he says this to them:

Matthew 28:18 | ¹⁸ “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

That's amazing, isn't it? That is 'The Great Commission' And do you hear the echoes of Mark 6?

Mark 6	Matthew 28
"...and [he] gave them authority..."	"'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'"
"Go..."	"'Therefore, go...'"
Jesus sends them into villages.	Jesus sends them to all nations
Travel light, trust God, don't be afraid of rejection.	"'...I am with you always,...'"

The mission hasn't changed. It's not changed; it's just grown. We've gone from villages to nations. Mark 6 is the seed, and Matthew 28 is the full-grown tree. What began with 12 nervous disciples walking into nearby villages, has become a global movement that has lasted over 2,000 years and reached every continent on earth.

And here's the bit that should make us sit up a little bit straighter in our chairs today. The Great Commission was not just given to super apostles. It wasn't just for Peter and John and the spiritual highflyers. It was given to ordinary believers who had a history of getting it wrong but had just learnt to trust Jesus, which means it's given to us too. Every time we pray 'Your kingdom come...', we are praying The Great Commission. Every time we invite someone to *Alpha*, or to church, or to a conversation about faith, we are living The Great Commission. Every time we show compassion in Jesus' name, speak hope into a dark moment or quietly share what God has done in our lives, we are obeying The Great Commission.

And notice this beautiful promise at the end of it: "'And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.'" Jesus doesn't say 'Go, and good luck.' He doesn't say, 'Go, and I hope you cope.' He doesn't say, 'Go, and I'll check in with you occasionally.' He says, "'I am with you always.'" The same Jesus who sent the 12 in Mark, now sends out his whole church. The same Jesus who gave them authority now gives us his spirit. The same Jesus who walked dusty village roads with them now walks with you into offices, schools, hospitals, shops and homes.

The Great Commission means this: **we are not carrying Jesus into a world on our own.** Jesus is already there, and he's inviting us to join him in what he's doing.

I was watching a relay race the other day. One runner sprints forward with the baton, and then he hands it on, then steps back as the other runner takes over. And it reminded me that Jesus is the first runner. He carries the mission. He runs with love and power and grace and truth. And then he turns to his disciples, to us, and he says, 'Now, it's your turn. Take the baton.' And now, 2,000 years later, he's still saying the same thing: 'Here is my mission. Here is my love for the world. Here is my Spirit. Here is my authority. Here is my call. Now, go! Go and do it!' It's not because we're amazing, not because we're fearless. Not because we're perfect, but because he is with us.

And his mission is unstoppable. And this is exciting, that Jesus is on a mission: from Nazareth, to the villages of Galilee, to hills outside Jerusalem, to the ends of the earth. And the best news of all, is that that mission didn't stop with the 12. It didn't stop in the first century. It didn't stop when church buildings were invented and took over all of our time. It didn't stop when things got difficult, or the culture shifted. It continues in us. Jesus has looked at his church, including this church, in this place, at this time, and he has said, "'all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.'" Therefore, "'Go, and surely I am with you always.'"

We are not 'too ordinary'. We are not 'too broken'. We are not 'too late'. We are not 'too inexperienced'. We are called, we are sent, we are empowered and we are accompanied by the living Christ. So, let's go with faith-filled excitement. Let's go with joy in our hearts – "'The joy of the Lord is our strength'" (Nehemiah 8:10). Let's go with humble courage. And let's go with joyful obedience. Because, who knows what God might do through a church who truly believes it is living the great commission, and walking on a mission with Jesus?

Amen.



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