

Sent by Jesus

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning. My name is Matthew Capone and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church. And it's my joy to bring God's word to you today. A special welcome if you're new or visiting with us.

We're glad that you're here and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow him together, we become convinced that there's no one so good.

They don't need God's grace and no one so bad they can't have it, which is why we gather week after week to hear what God has to say to us in his word. We're continuing our series in the Gospel of Mark.

We're also still in Mark chapter 6. And you'll remember that the Gospels tell the story of Jesus in his life and his death and his resurrection. And the two questions that we've been asking in this book are, one, who is Jesus? And two, how do we respond to him?

So I'll invite you to go ahead and turn there with me now to Mark chapter 6. I want to mention first, though, that I had a very successful trip to Costco on Friday.

[1 : 1 2] And there's only a few things that I buy at Costco that are extremely well-priced. And one of them are these Perfect Bars, which is a refrigerated protein bar. And they're a little bit expensive, but they're on coupon right now.

And they will be through April 3rd. So you heard it here. So I got five of them and I stuck them in my freezer. And if you look on the bar, there's this circle.

There's a lot of different labels on it, but there's this circle and it says, a low and then under it, GI. Low GI. And some of you watch your blood sugar carefully. And so you know what that means.

It means it has a low glycemic index. The glycemic index is a way of telling us which foods burn fast and which foods burn slow. And if something burns fast, maybe it has a lot of sugar in it, it'll give you a quick spike and then it'll give you a quick crash.

If it has that low GI, you know that's what you want. It's not going to digest quickly. It's going to be something that's going to give you energy over the long haul. It's going to keep, as I think my dad would say, it'll stick to your insides.

[2 : 1 9] Maybe that was my mom. I forget now. But as we come to this passage, that's the question that I want us to ask together. What is our fuel? What is our power as we move forward in the Christian life?

As we do the things that God has called us to do, especially as we talk about and share the gospel. That's what we're going to see from the disciples in this passage. Jesus, remember back in chapter 3, told them they were going to be with him and he was going to send them out.

And he finally does it in this passage. Their motivation, the things that power them are what we want to look at because there's a variety of different fuels that we can use in the Christian life.

I could try to motivate you this morning with shame or guilt. And that would probably work for a little bit. That would be a high GI plan.

It might get you to do something fast. Maybe it would give you a hit of that shame or that guilt, but it would also lead to a quick crash. That is not what's going to carry us forward week after week, year after year in the Christian life.

[3 : 21] We don't rely. We don't want to look to shame and guilt. In fact, quite the opposite, we look to Jesus to remove our shame and guilt. And so we need God to provide something else for us as our fuel, something to keep us going as we follow after him together, loving and serving Jesus.

And so the question then is, what is the low GI power and fuel in the Christian life? What is going to keep us burning for a long time? What allows these apostles to go forward doing what Jesus has commanded them?

It's with that question that we're going to turn together to Mark chapter 6, starting at verse 7. You can turn with me in your worship guide. You can turn in your Bible. You can turn on your phone.

No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's word. And God tells us that his word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, which means that God has not left us to stumble alone in the dark, but instead he's given us his word to show us the way to go.

And so that's why we read now, starting at verse 7. And he called the twelve and began to send them out two by two. And he gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

[4 : 30] 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, Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.

So they went out and proclaimed that the people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them. And I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's word.

Our Father in heaven, we freely admit and confess this morning that we are not able to understand your words without your help. And so we ask for that.

We ask that you would speak to us in ways that we can understand, that you'd honor your promise in Isaiah 55, that your word will accomplish what you've sent it for, that you'd honor your promise in 1 Corinthians 2, that the Holy Spirit will help us to understand these spiritual things.

[5 : 45] We ask for that help. We're helpless without it, that you would open our eyes, you'd unstop our ears, you'd soften our hearts, and you'd clear our minds, that we would see and hear and believe and understand everything that you've written for us in your word.

And we ask these things grateful that we don't have to earn them or deserve them, but instead we ask them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. We start here, chapter 6, verse 7, with a reference to the 12.

It's been a while since we've seen them. This phrase, the 12, only appears 10 times in the Gospel of Mark, and the first time we heard it was in chapter 3. You might remember that Jesus had gone up into a mountain, he'd called a variety of people to himself, and he had chosen these 12 to be his especially close group.

We also saw in chapter 3 that they're not just called the 12, Jesus also called them the apostles. You may know that this group, the apostles, were a narrower band that Jesus worked most closely with during his earthly ministry, and they had a special role in representing Jesus after he had returned to heaven.

So we already know that we're working with the insider group that's around Jesus, the group he's most focused on discipling and developing. The first time we saw them was back in chapter 3, and you'll remember, as I mentioned earlier this morning, Jesus had two goals for them.

[7 : 10] Goal number one is that they would be with him. Goal number two is that he would be able to send them out, it says, to preach and to cast out demons. And so Jesus has kept his word in this situation, and he's also kept the order.

In other words, it's important that they are with Jesus first before he sends them out. And we talked about that in chapter 3, that it's that relationship with Jesus, that mentoring and developing that they receive from him that is critical before and as Jesus sends them out.

And that's what we saw the second time they were mentioned in chapter 4, verse 10. It says, and when he was alone, those around him with the 12, that's the apostles, asked him about the parables.

That was when Jesus had taught the parable of the sower, and they needed this explanation to help them understand what Jesus was actually talking about. Jesus was working with them, developing them, mentoring them during this time.

It would certainly have been easy and tempting for him to pull them in as his help and his assistance, because Jesus was pressed in from every side. You might remember at one point he gets on a boat so that he can save his life.

[8 : 18] His family's worried about him, that he's working too much. And so it would make sense for Jesus to immediately delegate to these men to help him out. And yet Jesus does the opposite.

He focuses on his relationship with them above everything else. He spends his time teaching and developing them rather than using them. Jesus is more interested that these men grow and know him than he is that they immediately get to work in his mission.

And so it's here in chapter 3, Jesus has spent three chapters from 3 to 6, developing them and teaching them before he gives his apostles the car keys.

It was in chapter 3, verse 15, that he said he was going to give them authority to cast out demons. Here in chapter 6, verse 7, he finally does it. It tells us he gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

And so again, as I mentioned, Jesus has kept his word, he's kept his promise, and he's kept the order. It is critical that they are with Jesus before he sends them out.

[9 : 28] And it's false, by the way, for us to believe that these are two separate movements. So I don't want you to go away thinking, well, there was phase one, the being with Jesus phase, and then there was the phase two being sent out by Jesus.

No, these are things that are connected together. There is a relationship between the two. Jesus is going to send them out here, and what are they going to do next? Well, we're going to have this little short story next time about Herod.

Then they're going to come back. They're going to come back to be with Jesus again. As we go on through the Gospel of Mark, we're going to see that that relationship doesn't end. In Mark chapter 11, as Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, it notes that he does it with the 12.

As Jesus gathers in Mark chapter 14 to have the Passover, we're told he does it with the 12. Yes, Jesus sends these men out, and his presence with them never ends.

Jesus doesn't stop being with his apostles. Jesus doesn't stop being with his people. Jesus doesn't stop giving himself to those who follow after him.

[10 : 39] In fact, we're told in other books of the Bible that this continues even now. Jesus is still with us. Matthew chapter 28, Jesus gives these men his final commission, the great commission, telling them to go out and teach people and baptize them, making disciples.

And what does he tell them at the very end? Verse 20, And behold, I am with you always to the end of the age. I am going to heaven physically.

Spiritually, my presence continues, and it will continue forever. Jesus leaves the earth. He does not leave his people.

Jesus' mission is added to his presence. Jesus' mission does not replace his presence. What is our fuel as we go on Jesus' mission?

What is it that keeps us going? It is first that Jesus is still with us. Jesus is still with us.

[11 : 47] Jesus' promise from Matthew chapter 28 is still true. It continues now. How do I know? We have not reached the end of the age. That's how long the promise lasts.

Okay? Jesus calls his apostles to be with him. He does the same for us. We are not merely or simply cogs in the machine of God's kingdom.

We're his beloved sons and daughters. Now, as we come to with us language, it's tempting to stop there. It's tempting for that to simply be this pie-in-the-sky phrase, what I've talked before about the temptation of God talk.

And God talk is where we throw these things out that sound nice and wonderful. They're sentimental, and maybe they make us feel good for a moment, and we have no idea what they mean. What does it mean on the ground this Wednesday that God is with you, that Jesus is with you?

Well, I'm going to give you not necessarily everything, but a few things that it means. First of all, John chapter 14, Jesus makes this promise that as he leaves physically, he's going to do something even better than being here.

[12 : 58] He's going to send his spirit to be with his people. He says, I'm going to give you the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

Now, you might ask at this point, okay, great, the Holy Spirit's going to be with us. What good does that do for us? Well, thankfully, Jesus goes on in chapter 14 of John to tell us practically what that means for these people.

Verses 25 and 26, he says, the spirit will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. How was Peter able to remember everything that he told to Mark so that Mark could write them down for this gospel in Greek that was then translated and we are reading and studying together right now.

Peter was able to remember those things and tell them to Mark because Jesus by his spirit was with him. The Holy Spirit gave Peter practical help in his mind and his memory so that he would know the things that Jesus taught while he was with us on this earth.

Jesus being with us is not a mere sentiment. It is a real and helpful presence. Luke chapter 12, we're told something similar. Jesus tells his disciples, don't be afraid when you're called to appear before rulers and authorities.

[14 : 22] Why? Because the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. And so it's not just that Jesus was with Peter when the apostle Paul in the book of Acts appears before the rulers of the Roman government and has to give them a defense.

When he's invited to appear before them over and over again over the period of years, when he makes his trip to Rome, how is it that Paul knows exactly what to say? It is not because of Paul's many years of education.

It's not because he had the best teachers. No, Paul is able to stand and give a defense for the gospel because Jesus by his spirit is with him. Jesus' presence is real and powerful.

Jesus is teaching us by his word this morning and he doesn't leave us alone by ourselves to figure it out. I've mentioned it at least twice this morning.

1 Corinthians 2 tells us that the only reason and the only way we can understand what God has for us in his word is if his spirit comes and helps us.

[15 : 31] And so if you are understanding, if you've ever sat and listened to a sermon and you had that moment where you heard the word of God and everything came together for you and you understood it and you loved it and you wanted to change, do you know why that happened?

It did not happen because the preacher was brilliant. It happened because Jesus was with you by his spirit, explaining and helping you comprehend and understand the things that are in his word.

Okay, maybe the preacher was brilliant. Why? Because Jesus was with him. It is Jesus' presence that makes the difference.

We're gonna go on. James chapter one, verse five makes a bold promise to God's people. It tells us if we lack wisdom and we ask for it, God is going to give it to us.

That's a promise you should claim, by the way. You can go in prayer and say, God, you promised me in your word that you would give wisdom to those who ask for it. I'm asking for it.

[16 : 47] What is our hope as we face the challenges in this world? As you are parenting children and you run up against situations that you have no idea how to approach, when you're talking with people and you don't have the wisdom to know the words to say in that moment to help and to calm and protect.

What is your hope as you're dealing with those older and younger than you? As you're facing situations at work that are beyond your capacity, as you're trying to share the gospel with those who don't know Christ, your hope, brothers and sisters, is that Jesus is with you.

Your hope is that he honors his promise in James chapter one, verse five, that he gives wisdom to those who ask. If you remember from the book of Proverbs, Jesus is the one who is the ultimate representation and fulfillment of wisdom.

Jesus is with you by his spirit. That is our fuel and our power that keeps us going in the Christian life.

As I prepare week in and week out to preach in this church building, I pray multiple times a week that God would be with me and that he would be with you because I know that if he isn't and I step into this pulpit, I am dead on arrival.

[18 : 12] I can do no good apart from him. John chapter 15, I'm the vine, you are the branches. Apart from me, you can do no good.

He is the one who is at work. Remember Mark chapter four, verses 26 through 29, the parable of the seed growing. The sower doesn't know how it grows.

He's just sleeping, right? Because we're simply instruments. We're instruments for God's power at work in our lives.

We don't just have the fuel though of Jesus' presence. We're told something else in this passage. It's not just that Jesus is with you, it's that others are with you as well.

Okay, look with me. Verse seven, he calls the 12 and he begins to send them out two by two. You'll notice this appeared in our Old Testament reading as well.

[19 : 14] Ecclesiastes says it's better for there to be two rather than one. Not only does Jesus send them out two by two, we're not told which two get paired up together.

I mean, maybe like James and John were really hoping they were gonna get paired, you know? And maybe James got put with Matthias and that's not who he wanted to go out with. We don't even know because we're not told.

Why would we need to be told? Personality is not what matters. We're not interested in personalities or personality-driven ministry. There's nothing complicated here about this point.

I don't need to spend a lot of time explaining it because it's very simple. Christianity is not a team sport. It is a team sport. It's not a solo sport. Jesus sends people out as groups. He calls us together as a church community.

When Jesus calls you to himself, he calls you to his people as well. It is a package deal. You cannot separate Jesus from his church. You cannot separate your Christian walk from the brothers and sisters around you.

[20 : 18] Do not try to follow Jesus by yourself. Those who are sitting in front of you and behind you and to your left and your right this morning are part of the fuel that God has given you to make it in the Christian life.

They are who God has blessed you with. Remember I said God gives wisdom to those who ask for it?

How do you think he gives that wisdom? Yes, at times directly by his spirit. Many other times, God gives you that wisdom through older and wiser saints.

You can pray as much as you want for wisdom and you also need to put yourself in the place where wisdom comes. God has given you these people as part of his plan to impart you with wisdom.

Those who are in this room with you are part of your answer to that prayer that God would honor his promise in James chapter one, verse five. You might hear people say things like this.

[21 : 24] I don't really need the church. You know, I've got my three Christian friends. And we have a group and we have fellowship and we meet together. That's great. How many of them are older than you and wiser than you?

It's in the church that God blesses us with multiple generations. It's in the church that God blesses us with multiple backgrounds and ways of life.

It's in the church that God puts us with people we would not otherwise be connected with. My guess is those three other people you hang out with are somewhat similar to you.

There are people in this building that if they were not part of this church with you you would never meet them. And you would never go to them for wisdom. You often hear the phrase, don't try this at home.

Christian version is this, don't try it alone. Do not live the Christian life by yourself.

[22 : 31] That's part of the reason we as a church are not interested in personality-driven ministries. If you've been at our church for a really long time, you might remember the time in our history where the pastor did everything up front.

David Johnson's already been up here to read the Old Testament reading and to pray. Next week, it's gonna be Jim Franks who's gonna be up here to read the Old Testament reading and to pray.

Week after that, first Sunday of April, it's gonna be John Alpeter who's gonna be up front to read the Old Testament reading and to pray. And I say that not to say that it's all about what happens here on Sunday morning, but that's one piece, one symbol of what it is that we want as a church, that our focus and our intensity is not around one person or personality, but that we are actually following Jesus together as one community, that we're not relying on one individual, but instead people who are walking side by side, following Jesus together.

And as you see that assisting elder up front every Sunday morning, that is just one piece, one picture of what we want to be true of our lives as Christians Monday through Saturday.

We want to be people who go at least two by two. Don't try to witness alone.

[23 : 49] Have others praying with and for you. Don't try to fight sin alone. Have others that you can confess to and grow with.

Don't try to follow Jesus alone. And so that's why I say every Sunday that we're following Jesus together as one community.

Jesus has given us his fuel in the church. What's our power to keep going? It's that Jesus is with us. Others are with us.

It's not simply that though. It's also that Jesus provides for us. We have this interesting section here in verses eight through 10, where Jesus tells them to take nothing for their journey.

And what I want to tell you up front is that all of you in your Christian life need to take a staff. That was a joke, okay? We don't want to approach this passage rigidly.

[24 : 51] Jesus is giving specific instructions for this specific group. So we want not a rigid rule from this, but a principle. We read scripture with scripture. That's one of the ways we interpret the Bible.

And we can look at other portions of scripture and see these are not always Jesus' instructions. So in this passage, they're allowed to have sandals with them. Guess what? In Luke 10, they're out of luck, no sandals.

Matthew 10, no sandals. Matthew 10, Luke 9, no staff. Here, they're allowed to have a staff. Jesus doesn't give these sorts of requirements in other commissioning passages. So I've already talked about Matthew 28.

Jesus does not say, behold, I'm with you to the end of the age as long as you don't have a second tunic. Okay? Mark 8, there's a commissioning. Jesus does not provide these sorts of instructions.

In fact, we have opposite examples. So in Acts chapter 28, we see the apostle Paul. He's in prison for two years. He supports himself, presumably out of his own savings, while under house arrest, and people come visit him so he can teach.

[25 : 55] Other parts in Paul's career, he's making tents. He's working to support himself. Luke chapter 8, verse 3, Jesus is supported by women out of their resources who give him what he needs.

Another way of coming at it is this. This is for a limited mission, right? Jesus is sending out these particular people on a specific mission. He's not sending you out on that same specific mission. So if you have two tunics, it might be okay.

Okay? It also assumes other people aren't doing it. If everyone is doing this, there's not going to be any house for people to stay at and be fed by. So the whole thing is predicated on this other community that's helping them.

At risk of beating a dead horse, I just want to say, when we come to passages like this, it's tempting to get weird with them. Okay? What we want to do with passages like this is recognize what's different between us and the original context.

What we also want to do is to draw out the general principle that can apply to multiple people in multiple situations. The principle is this. Simply, that we look to God ultimately for our power and our provision.

[27 : 04] The principle is simply that we look to God for our power and our provision. God is the one who bankrolls his mission.

Our hope, personally, and our hope as a church, is not in large bank accounts. Our hope, personally, and as a church, is not in buildings.

And I'm not just talking about things that are financial and physical. We trust, as we go out in God's mission, that he is at work. Because if he isn't, it's worthless.

The promise, as we go out and share the good news, is that God already has people who belong to him to hear it and receive it.

In fact, that's the word of encouragement he gives to Paul in Acts chapter 18. Paul's in Corinth. The Lord says to this, it says, God has already planned who he's going to use Paul as his instrument to bring to himself.

[28 : 23] When we go out following Jesus together, our reliance, our power, our provision is from him alone.

Even the people who hear and respond to his word are people he's already chosen. We have nothing that Jesus doesn't provide.

And so the apostles here present us a small picture of that in this situation. In other words, we are instruments. God provides the power.

We're simply instruments. God's the one who provides. In fact, we see that in verse 7. He gives them authority over the unclean spirits.

Okay? We're instruments. We need God's power. Speaking of instruments, instruments, I had a lot of trouble the past couple weeks with my vacuum cleaner.

[29 : 24] And I'll tell you, I have a shark vacuum cleaner. I bought it. Yeah, that's right. Watch out. I bought it three, almost three years ago when I got my house.

And I'll tell you that as I was having trouble with this vacuum cleaner, the roller wasn't working, I began to have great and magnificent dreams of a Dyson. And I looked on Amazon to see what it would cost for a Dyson.

And I think it was at least a promise of two future children, if not three, depending on the model. And so I decided that was not part of my future. I would like my, you know, if I ever have children, I'd like them to stay in my house.

I don't want them to have to go and work for Amazon for the rest of their lives. Maybe you have a Dyson. And if you do, I'm grateful for you.

It's not the Dyson that has the power. It's not the Dyson that's great. It's the one who made it. And it doesn't matter how great your Dyson is if you can't plug it in.

[30 : 36] It doesn't matter how glorious of a vacuum cleaner it is if it doesn't have a power source. Brothers and sisters, some of us are sharks. Maybe a few of us are Dysons.

All the glory goes to God. And without his power, it doesn't matter. Without God's provision, it doesn't matter.

It's a worthless piece of plastic. Same is true for us. It is Jesus who provides the fuel and the power for our mission.

God made you. Gives you all the power that you need. And so that's what we do when we pray every Sunday.

It's what you do when you pray as an individual. It's what you do when you pray as families. You're saying, we don't have power. We don't have an extra tunic. We didn't bring any food.

[31 : 40] If this is going to work, God, you're going to have to show up. And so we're coming to you now and we're asking you to do that. We're asking you to show up. We're asking you to give us wisdom where we need wisdom.

We're asking you to provide where we need provision. We're asking that you would be at work because if you're not, what we do is worthless. We're asking for God's power and fuel to keep us going.

We have a sobering ending here to this passage. Verse 11, they're told, if a city doesn't receive them, they're to shake the dust off of their feet.

The way we would say it is this. You know what? You just need to wash your hands of that. It's time to move on. It's a symbol that they're moving on from that place.

Don't have anything to do with it. Don't be polluted by it. Don't be affected by it. Just move on. There are times when God's word is accepted and rejoiced at.

[32 : 50] There are times when God's word is rejected and hated. In both situations, the word has served its purpose. The Bible actually teaches this explicitly in 2 Corinthians 2.

Paul talks about what's called the aroma of Christ and he says, to some people, it's a fragrance from death to death. The other, a fragrance from life to life.

Some people smell the gospel and it smells wonderful and beautiful. Other people smell the aroma of Christ and it smells like death. The apostles are going to experience that as they go.

They're not to be stopped by it but instead to keep preaching repentance. We're told explicitly, verse 12, what it is that they're saying. It says, so they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.

It's what I've said before is that knowledge is dangerous. And knowledge is dangerous because we're held accountable for what we know. God uses his word to convict and convert.

[33 : 56] God also uses his word to confirm his judgment. It confirms even more how much someone has rejected him. And so we end with this as we look to God's fuel and his power.

As we look to the ways he provides by being with us and giving us his people, it's important to remember that is for those who follow after Jesus. that's for those who have heard this verse 12 message of repentance and they have received it.

Not that the dust has been shaken off but instead they are joining with the apostles, following after Jesus, looking to enjoy him and glorify him forever. Because Jesus is going to go on later in the gospel of Mark and die for all of these people.

God the Father is going to shake the dust off his feet at Jesus so he doesn't have to do it for us. He is going to do that to bridge the gap that's been created between us and God so that Jesus can be with us.

He is going to do that to adopt us as his sons and daughters and so that Jesus is not simply with us but he also gives us this great inheritance as people who are his family. He does that to earn for us and provide for us the fuel and the provision that we need to keep going and that is a fuel that will burn longer and farther than any guilt or shame.

[35 : 30] It is the fuel that will keep us going in the Christian life. In Luke chapter 10 we're told a similar story. Jesus is sending not the 12 but he's sending out the 72.

He's sending out this greater number to do a very similar mission. And they return after Jesus has given them this authority and they're so excited because of all the things they've seen and done and it says this the 72 returned with joy saying Lord even the demons are subject to us in your name.

They're thrilled that God's at work through them and Jesus rebukes them. Verse 20 do not rejoice in this that the spirits are subject to you but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

Brothers and sisters our ultimate hope and joy the fuel that keeps us going in the Christian life is not guilt or shame or discipline or diligence. The fuel that keeps us going is what Jesus provides for us this promise that he is with us.

He is with us now and he will be with us in an even greater way in the future that our names are written down in heaven and that there's nothing that can be done to erase them.

[36 : 50] That is a motivation and a power and a fuel that enables us to do more than anything else could and so we look forward to that time when we experience God with us more than we ever can imagine.

We experience being with others and we see the fulfillment of everything that Jesus has promised that no eye has seen or ear has heard but God has prepared for those who love him.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven we praise you and thank you that you are with us and we thank you for the ways you've been with us this morning by your word to encourage and sustain us.

We ask that you would continue to do that that you would stir up Jesus' words in our minds and you'd stir us up to walk not alone but with each other that we would experience your presence we'd experience the presence of one another and we'd experience the provision and the power that you give us along the way.

We thank you that we haven't earned or deserved any of these things but instead we look to your son and our savior our Lord Jesus Christ and we ask for them in his name amen.