

Sent them out two by two

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Seventh Sunday after Pentecost) is Mark 6:1-13. There are two stories in this reading. The first story is of Jesus going to his hometown (Nazareth) and being rejected. The second narrative is about him sending out his disciples to do ministry.

In the past texts we see Jesus having great success. But now a change seems to come; the power of God at work in Jesus is not accepted by everyone. Already we have read about a lack of support from his family (3:20–21, 31-35). Here that skepticism becomes community-wide. No doubt this is more than painful for Jesus. But, it does not stop him from reaching out to others, healing some and teaching. It is not as if God needs our faith in order to perform miracles. God is God and can perform miracles where and when he pleases.

In the second narrative Jesus calls the Twelve to himself and gives them these same powers so that through their preaching of the Word and miracles, people would believe in him as the one who could both heal and forgive sins. Notice how Christ prepares them—he teaches them, shows them his example, and sends them out two by two.

It was common at the time to travel in pairs, since travel was dangerous. It may also be, however, for the purpose of witnessing. In both Deut. 17:5 and 19:15 which requires at least two credible witnesses to establish any charge.

Even as Jesus sends the Twelve, He anticipates that not everyone will welcome the Gospel, as is still true today. Nevertheless, God unfailingly opens hearts and doors to their ministry, and He promises to do the same until the end of time.

We, too, have his Word which will do its work as explained in Isaiah 55:11: *“so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for showing us that rejection does not keep your kingdom from coming. Help us in time of difficulty to not become discouraged. Continue to have your Word grow our faith. Amen