

## Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Ezekiel 2:1-5

**He said to me, “Son of man, stand up on your feet and I will speak to you.”<sup>2</sup> As he spoke, the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet, and I heard him speaking to me.<sup>3</sup> He said: “Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day.<sup>4</sup> The people to whom I am sending you are obstinate and stubborn. Say to them, ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says.’<sup>5</sup> And whether they listen or fail to listen—for they are a rebellious house—they will know that a prophet has been among them.**

**2:1-5** The Babylonians attacked and sacked Jerusalem several times before the final destruction of the city in 587 BC. In one of these earlier attacks, probably around 597 BC, Ezekiel was among the thousands of inhabitants taken as prisoner to be resettled in the land of Babylon. God appeared to him there and gave him a prophetic mission that extended for more than twenty years, to both the exiles in Babylon and to those who remained in Judah. God’s message through Ezekiel emphasized a call to repentance and faithfulness in the period before 587, a reminder of God’s continuing grace and the hope it brings for the future in the period after 587. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

**2:1** *He.* God Himself, but under His revealed form as the “glory.” (TLSB)

*Son of man.* A term used 93 times in Ezekiel, emphasizing the prophet’s humanity as he was addressed by the transcendent God (see note on Ps 8:4). Da 7:13 and 8:17 are the only other places where the phrase is used as a title in the OT. Jesus’ frequent use of the phrase in referring to himself showed that he was the eschatological figure spoken of in Da 7:13 (see, e.g., Mk 8:31 and note). (CSB)

God never addresses Ezekiel by name, but by “son of man” 93 times throughout Ezk. The expression accents the prophet’s weakness as a creature in contrast to the Creator’s omnipotence displayed in the vision. (TLSB)

Perhaps this form of address was meant to teach Ezekiel something important. Although the Lord was granting him special visions, although the Lord was giving him the privilege of transmitting God’s truth to His people, and although the Lord had picked him to fill the role of prophet-in-exile, Ezekiel was still a son of man. He was just a human being, a sinful son of Adam. It was not as priest or as pious man or as Israelite that Ezekiel was called to be the Lord’s spokesman, but as a frail mortal who brought nothing but weakness to the task. (PBC)

People in leadership positions, including leadership positions among God' people, are in circumstances perfect for fostering pride. Pride not only is a direct violation of God's command to love, but gets in the way when people attempt to carry out service for God. It builds barriers and makes God-pleasing interpersonal relationship extremely difficult. (PBC)

STAND - To raise up and take a firm stance which might suggest that you are going to stay at least until what is to take place has been accomplished. Ezekiel had been knocked to the ground by the glory of God (Ezekiel 1:28) This type of action also happens in the following verses: (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

Joshua 5:13-15 “Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, “Are you for us or for our enemies?” “Neither,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come.” Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, “What message does my Lord have for his servant?” The commander of the LORD's army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did so.”

1 Kings 8:11 “And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple.”

Daniel 10:9-12 “then I heard him speaking, and as I listened to him, I fell into a deep sleep, my face to the ground. A hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said, “Daniel, you who are highly esteemed, consider carefully the words I am about to speak to you, and stand up, for I have now been sent to you.” And when he said this to me, I stood up trembling. Then he continued, “Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them.”

Matthew 17:1-8 “After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. “Get up,” he said. “Don't be afraid.” When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.”

Acts 9:3-6 “As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked. “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

**2:2** *the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet.* The Spirit of God, who empowered the chariot wheels (1:12, 19; 10:16–17) and the creatures (1:20), now entered Ezekiel—symbolizing the Lord’s empowering of the prophet’s entire ministry. (CSB)

The Spirit works through the Word, and so enters Ezekiel’s spirit and raises him, as it were, from the dead. Cf Rm 8:11. (TLSB)

Ezekiel, like us, cannot do anything without the help of the Spirit. The explanation to the Third Article says it well, “I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord or come to Him, but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith...” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

Since Ezekiel was a sinful son of man, he couldn’t on his own stand in the presence of God, nor could he properly receive orders from the Lord. But the Lord made up for Ezekiel’s spiritual insufficiencies. The Spirit stood him on his feet and made him ready to listen to the Lord. God is always the one who is responsible for making sinful humans into people who can stand in His presence. He makes them into people who have the courage to receive orders from Him and to carry out those orders. (PBC)

It might be our tendency to stay lying face down with Ezekiel, overcome with awe, when we are led to experience the mercy and majesty of the Lord. But the Lord doesn’t let His people just lie around and bask in His glory. He has work for us to do. He lets us view the rainbow of His grace, orders us to stand up and listen to Him, and then empowers us to do so. (PBC)

**2:3** *send you.* An official assignment. The word “apostle” is derived from the Gk equivalent. (TLSB)

It means to appoint someone to a task that involves movement on the part of the person being sent. Examples of others being sent follow:

Genesis 12:1 “The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.”

Exodus 3:10 “So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

Judges 6:14 “The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian’s hand. Am I not sending you?”

Isaiah 6:8 “Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Acts 26:16 “Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you.”

*the people of Israel.* Lit, “sons of Israel,” emphasizing the theme of hereditary guilt (or original sin). The phrase is relatively rare in Ezk. (TLSB)

*Israel.* Ambiguous in the OT. Originally it is the covenant name of God’s chosen people. The religious significance was preempted for political purposes when the 10 northern tribes broke away and used it as the name of their country (1Ki 12). Ezekiel uses “Israel” for (1) the conquered Northern Kingdom, (2) the exiles with him in Babylon, and (3) those still in the land of Israel. Ezekiel’s audience here was those exiled with him, but it often sounds as though he is also writing to those still in Jerusalem. There was communication between the two communities, and their religious ideas were essentially the same. (TLSB)

*rebellious nation.* A keynote of Ezekiel’s preaching: The entire nation throughout its history had been rebellious against God. (CSB)

Parallel to “people of Israel.” In later Hbr, “nations” assumed the meaning of “Gentiles” (i.e., heathen unbelievers). The implication here seems to be that the rebellious Israelites were like another heathen nation before God. (TLSB)

This was a reference to a heathen, Gentile people. This would have really shaken the Israelites up to be called this.

Ezekiel was to take his message to people descended from Israel. Because of God's choice of their nation to produce the Savior these people had a special national relationship with God. Most of them, nevertheless, had rebelled against the Lord. They had insisted on following other gods. They had insisted on disobeying God's will. This is why they were in exile. But even their years in exile had not led most of them to repent of their rebellious ways. In spite of their lack of inclination to repent and in spite of what appeared to be a lost cause, God still sent His prophet to these people. (PBC)

Here we have an excellent view of the patient, long-suffering Lord. He suffered the rejection of His people for a long time, but it didn't hinder Him from trying to bring them to repentance. Reminders of the Lord's patient endurance help keep us from becoming frustrated when we don't seem to be successful in reaching others with the Lord's call to repentance. (PBC)

**2:4** Ezekiel's primary mission was to his present generation. They were born rebels, but they could not evade personal responsibility by blaming their ancestors. (TLSB)

**OBSRINATE** – (ESV, impudent'): literally translates "hard of face(s)" or colloquially, "hard-headed." They refuse to let in that which is good for them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

**STUBBORN** – Means "strong of heart." Here, however, the strength is not positive. Rather, it equates to the pejorative "strong willed." They demand to do, and then indeed do that which they desire, not what God wills. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

**SOVEREIGN LORD** – (ESV, "Lord God": Lord Yahweh is a common Hebrew construct. The Jews refused to use the name of God, substituting Adonai. Thus we are left with Adonia Adonai (Lord Lord). The difficulty is minor, except that it contributes to a Reformed misunderstanding of God, following the Calvinist model of viewing Him according to His sovereignty. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 3)

God sends Ezekiel to preach His Word, not Ezekiel's own judgments. This expression is used far more frequently in Ezk than in the rest of the OT, so much so that it almost becomes Ezekiel's signature. (TLSB)

**2:5** *hear*. In the sense of "listen" or "obey." (TLSB)

*rebellious house.* Instead of “house of Israel. (TLSB)

*they will know that a prophet has been among them.* Variant of Ezekiel’s recognition formula, “Then you will know that I am the LORD.” They may have to learn the hard way, but learn they will! A prophet (or pastor) who preaches only what his audience wants to hear is rebellious and unfaithful. A prophet or pastor is not called to be successful by earthly standards, but to be faithful. (TLSB)

Ezekiel was to disregard the people’s willingness or unwillingness to receive his message. He was not to stop transmitting the Lord’s message even if they refused to listen to it. Thus even the rejecters would have to admit that a prophet, a transmitter of the Lord’s message, had been at work among them, especially after Jerusalem fell as the prophet had said it would. Transmitters of the Lord’s message always must make clear what they are saying is what the Sovereign Lord says. We need to be ready to point to God’s written Word so people are aware we are not just giving them our opinions. (PBC)

#### EPISTLE – 2 Corinthian 12:1-10

**I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord. <sup>2</sup>I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. <sup>3</sup>And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— <sup>4</sup>was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. <sup>5</sup>I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses. <sup>6</sup>Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say. <sup>7</sup>To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. <sup>8</sup>Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. <sup>9</sup>But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. <sup>10</sup>That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.**

**12:1 MUST GO ON BOASTING** – Paul is continuing with his boasting, this time about visions and revelations, in particular a special vision the Lord had granted him at an earlier point in his ministry. It was an experience which up to this time he had almost certainly not disclosed to the Corinthians since he realized there was nothing to be gained by doing so. Paul knew that ministers of the gospel do not help their people by boasting about their own personal religious

experiences. Faith is engendered and faith grows by proclaiming the word, not by parading experiences. (PBC)

Sarcasm or hyperbole. Paul's boasting gained a sharper contrast between himself and the super-apostles. (TLSB)

In these particular circumstances, however, Paul feels compelled to do a little boasting about his religious experiences. Although we are not specially told so, the "super-apostles" apparently were using some supposed visions and revelations to back up their claim to spiritual authority. Paul therefore, asserts that he too can speak of visions and revelations from the Lord. (PBC)

*visions and revelations.*† If his adversaries falsely claimed to have received their teaching directly from God through visions and revelations, Paul could claim that it was truly so in his case. But he mentions it here to show that the supreme height to which he was raised through these ecstatic experiences was counterbalanced by the humbling depth of a particular affliction he was given to bear (see v. 7), so that he should continue to glory not in self but only in the "God of all grace" (1Pe 5:10). (CSB)

Faith is not built on mystical experiences. Paul met Jesus Himself on the Damascus Road (Ac 26:12–18). (TLSB)

*revelations of the Lord.* Paul saw the risen Lord and received information from Him (cf Ac 16:7–10). (TLSB)

In Bible times God often communicated with His people by means of visions and revelations. The book of Acts records several occasions on which Paul himself received a divine revelation. At the beginning of his second missionary journey, it was through a vision that Paul was directed to bring the gospel to Macedonia (cf. Acts 16:9-10). During Paul's stay in Corinth the Lord spoke to him in a vision, encouraging him to keep on proclaiming the gospel and promising him that no one would harm him (cf. 18:9-11). (PBC)

The vision Paul speaks of here, however, is not mentioned in the book of Acts or in any other letter of Paul. It was an intensely personal experience, which even now he hesitates to speak

of. Note how she shies away from using the personal pronoun “I.” Rather, he relates the incident in the third person, speaking simply of a man in Christ, that is, a Christian. (PBC)

**12:2** *man in Christ.* A roundabout way of speaking. Clearly, Paul is speaking of himself. See “in Christ.”

FOURTEEN YEARS AGO – This vision would have occurred prior to Paul’s first missionary journey, during the time he was in Tarsus waiting for further direction from the Lord (cf. Galatians 1:21). (PBC)

*caught up to the third heaven ... caught up to paradise.*† Paul is sure of this remarkable experience, but he is unsure whether this rapture (being “caught up”) was one that included the body or one that took place in separation from the body. The third heaven designates a place beyond the immediate heaven of the earth’s atmosphere and beyond the further heaven of outer space and its constellations into the presence of God himself. Thus the risen and glorified Lord is said to have passed “through the heavens” (Heb 4:14), and now, having “ascended higher than all the heavens” (Eph 4:10), to be “exalted above the heavens” (Heb 7:26). Some assume that the term “paradise” is synonymous with the third heaven, where those believers who have died are even now “at home with the Lord” (5:8; cf. “with Christ,” Php 1:23). The nature of the inexpressible things that Paul heard remains unknown to us because this is something Paul was not permitted to tell. It was an experience that must have given incalculable strength to his apostleship, which involved him in such constant and extreme suffering. Moreover, as this experience was not self-induced, it afforded him no room for self-glorification (vv. 5–6). (CSB)

Paul is absolutely passive; the Lord alone is doing and giving. (TLSB)

CAUGHT UP – The word translated “caught up” is used also in 1 Thessalonians. There it describes what will happen to the believers who are still alive when Jesus returns. They will be “caught up ... in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). That reference clearly refers to a bodily ascent into heaven. (PBC)

THIRD HEAVEN – Paul is possibly using terminology used by the Jews of his day. Some of them spoke of a three, others of a five – and others of a seven-layered heaven. At any rate, Paul defines what he means by the third heaven when he says that he was caught up to paradise. (PBC)



The highest heaven. "Heaven" is plural in Hbr, likely because the earthly atmosphere and the realm of God were distinguished. Here, Paul uses terminology typical of intertestamental Judaism, but he shows no interest in its details. (TLSB)

PARADISE – "Paradise" is the word used in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT, to describe the Garden of Eden. It is from a Persian word that means "park." (PBC)

In the NT the word "paradise" is used two other times. To the thief on the cross Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). In the book of Revelation we find this promise of Jesus: "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God" (Revelation 2:7). From these two references it appears clear that by the terms third heaven and paradise Paul is referring to the place where the beauty and perfection of what once was in Eden will be restored and never end, the place the Bible in most cases simply calls "heaven." (PBC)

INEXPRESSIBLE – Not only had Paul seen an amazing sight, he had also heard some amazing sounds. So amazing were they, in fact, Paul says they were inexpressible. Besides that, says Paul, they were things that man is not permitted to tell. What Paul heard while he was given a revelation of paradise was impossible for him to repeat, and even if he could have done so, he had been instructed not to. (PBC)

These words are a reminder that new and exciting experiences await the believer in heaven, sights and sounds that cannot be described in human language. St. John writes in his first epistle, "Dear friends, now we are children of God and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Many great and wonderful surprises await children of God when on the last day they are caught up into heaven. (PBC)

Paul had been given an advance glimpse of this glory awaiting him and all believers. Why the Lord granted this vision to him Paul does not state. We can safely assume, however, that it was one way by which the Lord strengthened Paul for the years of missionary work that lay before him. In difficult days he could keep before his eyes the vision of the glory that one day would be his, as he wrote to the Romans, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). (PBC)

*in the body or out of the body.* His spiritual faculties were alert, but Paul's total focus on the Lord and complete forgetfulness of self made him unaware of how his body related to this experience. He may have had the experience as a vision, or he may have been physically taken to heaven. (TLSB)

**12:3** *paradise.* Used here as an equivalent to "third heaven," v 2. This Persian term for an aristocrat's private park became a loanword in intertestamental Judaism to describe first the Garden of Eden and then the dwelling place of believing souls after death. Some Jewish interpreters held that God took Eden to heaven. (TLSB)

**12:4** *things that cannot be told.* It was impossible to put into words and not something people needed to know. (TLSB)

**12:5** *I will boast about a man like that.* Some believe that the man "caught up to the third heaven" (v. 2) was not Paul and that Paul here insists that he will not boast about such a glorious experience but only about his weakness. (CSB)

God alone enacts this experience, so Paul can claim no credit. (TLSB)

In saying that he will boast about a man like that, Paul is continuing to use the third person in speaking of his vision of paradise. In fact, he speaks so indirectly about this "man in Christ," one might even be led to conclude that he is talking about another person. The verses that follow, however, verse 7 especially, make it clear that Paul is describing himself. (PBC)

Though the Corinthians, in their obsession with externals, have forced Paul to boast about this experience, he emphasizes, I will not boast about myself. He wants them to know that by revealing this experience to them he is not saying, "Look how great I am." Let the super-apostles speak that way. (PBC)

**EXCEPT ABOUT MY WEAKNESSES** – He wants the Corinthians to see only the greatness of God. God's greatness is seen most clearly as he carries out his work through weak human beings. Paul, therefore, will not hesitate to boast about his weaknesses (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:30). (PBC)

Or, "illnesses." Paul turns from boasting to confess his faults. (TLSB)

With these words Paul is turning from the subject of being caught up into paradise. He is ready to move on to something that magnified God's greatness through Paul's weakness. Before do so, however, he wants to make it clear that he has been totally honest about everything of which he has been boasting. (PBC)

**12:6** EVEN IF I SHOULD CHOOSE TO BOAST – Throughout the final chapters of 2 Corinthians, beginning with chapter ten, Paul has made it clear that he feels uneasy in boasting about himself – his ancestry, his labors, his experiences. The boast of the “super-apostles,” however, had thrust him into this uncomfortable role. (PBC)

I WOULD BE SPEAKING THE TRUTH – In these words there is likely the implication that the “super-apostles” were not speaking the truth. If Paul has to resort to boasting about his labors and experiences, at least what he says will not exceed the bounds of truth. (PBC)

BUT I REFRAIN – He has come to the end of such boasting and is getting back to more comfortable ground: boasting about his weaknesses and God's power. Paul wants people to accept him and his message, not because of such phenomena as miraculous visions, but because of the power of the message alone. (PBC)

A wise choice, because Paul remained chief of sinners, living by pardoning grace. (TLSB)

Isaiah 42:2, He will not shout or cry out, or raise His voice in the streets.”

42:2 *not shout or cry out*. He will bring peace (see 9:6). (CSB)

He (Jesus the Suffering Servant) is so sure of Himself and of the cause He represents that He can well expect His message to carry itself successfully through every test. How often Jesus shunned publicity, even though His aim was to carry His gospel to all men. (Luther)

This passage is quoted in Matthew (12:18). It is an appreciation of the Word to make us take notice and be submissive and obedient. (Luther)

**12:7 KEEP ME FROM BECOMING CONCEITED** – *auperairomai* □ To exalt one's self and become haughty. This can easily happen when we experience success like Paul had in much of his ministry. (QV)

So overwhelming was this anticipation of the world to come that the Lord saw fit to bring Paul back to earth with a thump. (TLSB)

Pride would be a natural reaction to the kinds of revelations Paul had received. Such pride may well have been at the root of his opponents' boastful claims and the cause of their downfall (see 1 Tim 3:6), but Paul's theology of the cross is also a theology of humility. For Paul to do his proper work of revealing Christ, he must be humble in circumstances and in soul. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

*thorn in my flesh.* The precise nature of this severe affliction remains unknown. (CSB)

Probably a chronic health problem, but we are not told. (TLSB)

Bible commentators down through the ages have offered numerous suggestions. The majority lean toward the idea that it was some kind of chronic physical problem. Paul is possibly referring to this thorn in Galatians when he says, "AS you know, it was because of an illness [literally, "a weakness of the flesh," or "bodily weakness"] that I first preached the gospel to you" (Galatians 4:13). That has led some to speculate that Paul's thorn was malaria, a reoccurrence of which had supposedly forced him to leave low-lying Perga quickly and move up to Antioch of Pisida, which lay at a higher elevation (cf. Acts 13:13). (PBC)

Others suppose it may have been a severe eye problem (cf. Galatians 4:15; 6:11). Still others speculate the thorn may have been a speech impediment of some sort, such as stammering, which Paul's opponents in Corinth would have contrasted with their skill in oratory. (PBC)

The truth of the matter is that we don't know and won't know this side of heaven what Paul's thorn in the flesh was. We can infer from the word "thorn," however, that it was a sharp pain of some sort. We can also infer that it was a reoccurring, nagging pain. The Greek text brings out that Paul's thorn in the flesh was given to "keep on tormenting" him. (PBC)

Deuteronomy 8:5 “Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.”

*messenger of Satan.* A further description of Paul’s thorn (cf. 1Co 5:5; 11:30; 1Ti 1:20; see Job 2:10). (CSB)

Evils of body and soul—permitted by God to work a greater good—occur through demonic agency. (TLSB)

Satan was an unwitting tool of God in this respect. Satan would have seen the thorn as an opportunity to bring evil upon a child of God, but God used the thorn to accomplish His good purpose of keeping Paul humble. (PBC)

TO TORMENT ME – kolapaizo □ To hit with the fist or buffet.

Job 2:7 “So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.”

1 Peter 5:8 “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”

**12:8** THREE TIMES I PLEADED – Paul prayed for this problem to be removed; most of us would do the same. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

Probably a literal number but also a way of getting across a serious and prolonged prayer concern. (TLSB)

Paul might have argued that the thorn kept him from fulfilling his apostolic task of preaching the Gospel and that its removal would have advanced the Gospel. But the Lord’s work did not depend on Paul’s strength or ability. God’s grace alone would get the Gospel out into the world. God in His grace had chosen Paul. God’s grace would be enough to supply Paul’s every need. The power of grace is made perfect in weakness. (LL)

Paul's prayers about his thorn are reminiscent of Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane in that both asked three times. He was persistent in his prayer, just as his Savior had been. Believers today also are encouraged to call upon their Lord in the day of trouble. The Lord promises to deliver us (cf. Psalm 50:15). The Lord's deliverance, however, does not always take the form we might expect. So it was with Paul and his thorn. (PBC)

**12:9** *My grace is sufficient for you.* A better solution than to remove Paul's thorn. Human weakness provides the ideal opportunity for the display of divine power. (CSB)

arkeo To be satisfied because what we have is more than we really need. What Paul lacked, the Lord supplied. A poster states, "Pray not for an easier life but for strength to deal with the problems." (QV)

Such dependence is not easy; it is one of the things which experience of failure and frailty alone can bring us. (PC)

Christ's almighty power works great things through feeble instruments (cf 4:7). "Troubles are not always punishments for certain past deeds, but they are God's works, intended for our benefit, and that God's power might be made more apparent in our weakness. So Paul says God's strength 'is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9). Because of God's will, our bodies should be sacrifices, to declare our obedience, and not to pay for eternal death. God has another price for that: the death of His own Son" (Ap XIIB 63–64) (TLSB)

All Paul's weaknesses are covered and hidden away under the tent of Christ's power. It cannot be spread over one whose boast is in his own strength. (Lenski)

\* Can't pour much tea into a full cup – story of young man and Shinto priest.

\* Doctor us useless if you don't admit your illness.

Isaiah 40:31 "but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Isaiah 41:10 "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand

The responded by showing him the thorn's true purpose, thereby assuring him that what appeared to be a hindrance actually strengthened his work. Christ abundantly provided whatever was lacking due to Paul's weakness. Christ's power was more fully relied upon and more plainly seen when Paul's limitation were apparent. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

We carry the comparison between Jesus in Gethsemane and Paul one step further. Lord brought positive good out of both situations. By drinking the cup Jesus paid the ransom price of death to win forgiveness for the world. By continuing to suffer with his thorn, Paul kept the spotlight shining on Jesus rather than himself. As people looked at and listened to the weak, frail, thorn-in-the flesh-beset Paul, they would be led to concluded: There must be a greater power behind this man to enable him to do all things he is doing. That power, of course, was the Lord, the Savior. (PBC)

**12:10** When affliction reduces Paul to total dependence on God, then he is most of all a supple instrument in Christ's hand. (TLSB)

Cf. Eph 3:16; Php 4:13. (CSB)

I DELIGHT IN WEAKNESS; IN INSULTS; IN HARSHIPS – Paul's weaknesses are covered and hidden away under the tent of Christ's power. Peter often boasted and then fell on his face because he tried to go it alone.

With these words Paul is turning the table on his opponents. They had pointed to his weaknesses as evidence that he could hardly be a genuine apostle. This is another way of saying what Paul had already stated in this letter: "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (4:7). (PBC)

Tempests may toss but those storms will purify the atmosphere. (PC)

WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN I AM STRONG – We are dealing with a paradox here. The world says, "Only when I am strong, only when I have status, power, influence, wealth, only then I am strong." The Christian says, "Only when I am weak, only when I realize that the world's symbols of strength mean nothing even if I have them all, only then am I strong." Those who find their strength in Christ can then, with Paul, be strong for Christ. (PBC)

For now Paul realized that when he is weak, when he can no longer depend on himself – then he is truly strong, for then he depends entirely upon God. And God is completely dependable. (LL)

See Judges chapter 6.

Paul concludes his boasting. He will accept weakness and hardship and even welcome them as part of his ministry – not because he finds perverse pleasure in experiencing pain, but because he knows that people will see the glory and power of Christ working through him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

Acts 5:41 “The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.”

Romans 5:3-6 “Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly”

**12:1–10** Like scarcely any other person before or since, Paul tasted the powers and bliss of heaven, but at the same time suffered bitterly under the curse of sin. “You are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Gn 3:19), yet believers truly already sit in the heavenly places (cf Eph 1:3). • Lord, help us keep our balance as we walk with one foot in the perishing world and the other in the world to come! Amen. (TLSB)

#### GOSPEL – Mark 6:1-13

**Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. <sup>2</sup> 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! <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Jesus said to them, “**Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor.**” <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> And he was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. <sup>7</sup> Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil <sup>a</sup> spirits. <sup>8</sup> 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 tunic.<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, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.”<sup>12</sup> They went out and preached that people should repent.<sup>13</sup> They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

**6:1-6** The start of Mark 6 begins a major new section of Mark’s gospel. In chapter 4 we read of the powerful teachings of Jesus; in chapter 5 the accent is on his powerful deeds (both his wisdom and his miracles are referred to in 6:2). 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, 3135). Here that skepticism becomes community-wide. No doubt this is more than painful for Jesus. This rejection in his hometown leads to the narrative in which Jesus calls and instructs his disciples (6:7–13). The work of God will go on even if God’s agents are rejected or even killed. That theme of rejection continues through chapter 6, where the death of John the Baptizer, the forerunner, foreshadows Jesus’ own death. The incident in Jesus’ hometown is not the final rejection for him; Mark will focus on that in the passion narrative at the end of his gospel. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 3)

The text offers us a stark contrast between the hostility of the people directed against Jesus and the faithfulness of Jesus to God’s saving mission in the world. Even though Jesus is rejected in his hometown, he calls his disciples and sends them out in mission. When the people reject Jesus because of his literal family, Jesus reaches out to the people through the family of God, and he does so in order to make all people part of God’s family. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**6:1** *his hometown.* Though Mark does not specifically mention Nazareth, it is obviously meant (see note on 1:9). (CSB)

Nazareth, the town where Jesus was raised (Mt. 2:19-23), not Capernaum, from which He conducted His ministry. (TLSB)

Mark here does not explicitly identify Jesus’ *patris*, “hometown.” We may assume it is Nazareth (cf. Mk 1:9, the only reference to Nazareth in Mark). Note also the parallel incident in Lk 4:23-24. Special mention is made of the disciples being along, a device Mark uses to indicate where the church of his own day is to find authority. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 3)

Mark highlights that Jesus is returning to his hometown. Rather than name the city, Mark identifies it as Jesus’ home. In an earlier reading, Mark has shown the familial

tension that occurs when Jesus goes home. In Mk 3:20–35, Jesus is surrounded by a crowd, and his family tries to take him by force, claiming that he has lost his mind (vv 20–21). In the context of such tension, Jesus redefines what it means to be part of his family and reveals the true family of God (vv 31–35). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**6:2** *teach in the synagogue.* See note on 1:21. (CSB)

Wherever Jesus went He always went to the synagogue on the Sabbath because it presented a forum for Him to preach the Gospel. (Buls)

It appears that Jesus had not yet preached in the Nazareth synagogue, as He had in Capernaum. (TLSB)

*were amazed.* See note on 1:22. (CSB)

The hearers were amazed at his teaching. The comments at first were short and quiet, and gradually became longer and louder. Here we have direct discourse. (Buls)

There is no record of Jesus doing miracles in Nazareth. (Buls)

The people are “amazed.” This does not necessarily mean that they were led to faith, although elsewhere the verb, *ekplēssō*, often does apply to some who came to faith (cf. Mk 1:22; 7:37; 10:26; 11:18). Only here in Mark (6:2) is Jesus said to have *sophia*, “wisdom.” Mark stresses the authority of Jesus’ teaching, not its cleverness. Even the *dunameis*, “works of power, miracles” are interpreted by that teaching. In Mark, Jesus’ words and works go together. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 3)

To be astonished. This doesn’t mean that it led to faith unlike those people listening in on the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew.

The synagogue audience was amazed at Jesus’ teaching and at His miracles of they had heard. In their eyes He was no more than a carpenter, a son of Mary, one who had four brothers and whose sisters were married and living in Nazareth. He was one of them, just an ordinary fellow who once made His living with His hands. How could he claim to be a prophet and the fulfillment of Scripture? It was more than they could stomach. They rejected His claim and then in their wrath attempted to cast Him off the cliff at the edge of town (Luke 4:28-30). (PBC)

Mark 1:22 “The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.”

Mark 7:37 “People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

Mark 10:26 “The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”

Mark 11:18 “The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.”

THIS MAN – “This fellow” is likely derogatory.

Jesus was true God and in that sense no one gave Him His teaching, wisdom or power to perform miracles. Of course, the divine nature in Christ gave the human nature in Christ the attributes of the divine, but that is surely not what these citizens of Nazareth mean. It is clear from what follows that unbelief prompted their questions. And this unbelief turns into hostility. (Buls)

It was not a family visit. This synagogue Jesus had attended as a boy, a teenager and a young man. The worshipers that day were all people who knew Him well. He had come to share the gospel with them, but they were not ready to receive Him as the one who embodied the gospel. In a certain sense this incident was important training for the disciples, who shortly would be proclaiming the gospel themselves and also facing rebuffs. They could say, “They did the same to our Master.” (PBC)

The three utterances “look to what counts in this society: family of origin, blood relations, inherited honor, social status and achievement of family members, group honor, and the like. (CC)

**6:3** *carpenter*.† Matthew reports that Jesus was called “the carpenter’s son” (Mt 13:55); only in Mark is Jesus himself referred to as a carpenter. The Greek word can apply also to a mason or smith, but it seems to have its usual meaning (“carpenter”) here. The question is derogatory, meaning, “Is he not a common worker with his hands like the rest of us?” (CSB)

Greek tekton applied not only to carpenters and woodworkers but also to those who fashioned goods from a combination of wood and stone (e.g., homes, which Jesus often mentioned in His teaching). The context suggests that Jesus’ old neighbors mentioned His days as a tradesman in order to draw an unflattering contrast with His new role as teacher. (TLSB)

"This" here is plainly derogatory. Here Jesus is called the carpenter. In Matthew 13:55, the parallel passage, He is called "the carpenter's son." Likely He was called both on this occasion. Notice that Jesus is called "the son of Mary." Joseph is not mentioned. In the Matthean parallel He is called "the carpenter's son" which is the closest we come to Joseph. Joseph had likely died before this time and therefore is not mentioned. (Buls)

*brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon.* See note on Lk 8:19. (CSB)

Though none of these four brothers of Jesus believed in Him as Savior during His earthly ministry (Jn. 7:5), James and Jude did so after His resurrection. James saw the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor. 15:7) and became a leader in the Jerusalem Church (cf. Acts 12:17; 15:13; 21:18; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12; James 1:1). He wrote the short Epistle that bears his name. Judas wrote the short Epistle called Jude. Sisters, unfortunately, go unnamed and unnumbered. Consequently, nothing else is known of them. (TLSB)

Four of His brothers are mentioned. They were either cousins or half-brothers. "And aren't His sisters here with us?" "With us" denotes close association. Here it indicates that they know Jesus' sisters quite well. (Buls)

Most of the best Greek manuscripts say Jesus is "the carpenter, the son of Mary." Some manuscripts read, "the son of the carpenter," as does the parallel verse Mt 13:55, although in neither reference is Joseph named. We may safely construe *adelphos*, "brother," and *adelphai*, "sisters," to indicate Jesus' immediate family. The important emphasis here is on their familiarity with Jesus. The verb *skandalizomai* at with the dative occurs also in Mt 11:6; 13:57; 26:31, 33 and Lk 7:23. Passive offendedness can easily turn into active persecuting. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 3)

What happened to Christ in Nazareth can also happen to us. Just because we are followers of the Lord does not guarantee that all our relatives, neighbors and acquaintances will welcome the gospel message – or even our children. At times some us stand alone, ridiculed and mocked by those who know us best. But it is easier to bear when we realize Jesus also had to bear that same burden. (PBC)

*they took offense at him.* They saw no reason to believe that he was different from them, much less that he was specially anointed by God. (CSB)

Jesus did not give offense; rather, the people took offense at His words and actions. (TLSB)

"Took offense" comes from a verb that means "I set a trap for." They were ensnared in their unbelief. (Buls)

Fahling: For the last time Jesus of Nazareth was to visit the city of Nazareth, again to be rejected as at the beginning of His great Galilean ministry, about eight or nine months before, Luke 4:16-30. . . . It is perfectly natural that Jesus should give the Nazarenes another opportunity to hear His teaching. But what surprises us is that Jesus marveled at: the unbelief of His townsmen, which lay at the bottom of their estimate and treatment of a 'native son'. (Buls)

Those who consider this the same event as that mentioned in Luke 4 do not speak of Jesus giving the Nazarenes a second chance. (Buls)

The fact that these Nazarenes could see no more than a human being in Jesus says much about how Jesus conducted Himself while He was growing up in Nazareth. The people do not say in so many words that they know Jesus personally, but that is what they mean. During the thirty years which He spent in Nazareth "He made Himself of no reputation." (Buls)

Mary and Joseph were told individually before Jesus was born that He was true God. But they had forgotten it and had to learn the lesson again when Jesus was twelve years old. (Buls)

Before we leave this verse we ask a tantalizing question, to which there is no answer: "Where was Mary on this occasion or occasions?" Nothing is said nor need we know. (Buls)

skandalon - A "scandal" a *trap stick* (*bent sapling*), that is, *snare*. This draws to the mind of the original hearers/readers the stick an animal stumbles over, causing the trap to shut. In 1 Corinthians 1:23 the Jews would see the crucifixion of the Messiah as a stumbling block because anyone killed on a cross was cursed. It was scandalous to think that their God was executed as a criminal.

**6:4** OWN HOUSE IS A PROPHET WITHOUT HONOR – Jesus responded with an aphorism to which there are numerous parallels in Jewish and Greek literature. The comparison of His experience to that of the prophets who were dishonored among their own people is ironical. It anticipates His ultimate rejection by Israel and at the same time recalls chapters 3:20-21, 31-35 when Jesus' family and kinsmen expressed the opinion that He was insane and attempted to halt His activities forcibly. (Lane)

"Said to them" means "went on to say." "Them" are the listeners in the synagogue. This can be either direct or indirect discourse. Our versions take it as direct discourse. (Buls)

"A prophet is not without honor" means the same as "a prophet is honored" but the former is more emphatic. Several of our versions remove the double negative. NEB: "A prophet will always be held in honor etc." LB: "A prophet is honored everywhere except etc." (Buls)

There are three places or areas in which a prophet, a teacher, does not receive honor: (Buls)

1. His home-town,
2. His relatives,
3. His own household.

Commentators are not certain as to whether or not verse 4 is a proverbial saying. At any rate, it is an axiom, a truth readily understood in any culture. Everyone understands it on the basis of experience. The Scriptures contain many axioms, a good teaching device. (Buls)

This is the only place in the gospel where Jesus refers to himself as a prophet. The "prophet without honor" aphorism may have been created by Jesus himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 3)

Here it is not the immediate members of his family but the larger social network of his hometown that takes offense at Jesus because they know of his familial relations (vv 2–3). As Jesus makes this pronouncement, however, notice how he highlights a pervasive rejection of him that moves from his hometown to his relatives and even into his own household. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**6:5-6** The statement that "[Jesus] could do no mighty work there" is a troubling passage. It is easy for some to argue on the basis of this passage that Jesus needs your faith in order to produce a miracle. The fact that Jesus did do some miracles here is important in light of this confusion. 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. After all, on the Last Day God will raise the dead, both those who believe in him and those who do not. But here, in the face of unbelief, Jesus does not do miracles. Why not? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

One can read this passage in light of the rest of Scripture. Taking Mt 11:20–24 into account, Jesus does not do miracles in the face of unbelief because he knows that miracles do not convert (see, for example, Lk 16:31) and that performing miracles in the face of unbelief will only increase God's judgment upon those who see them (Mt 11:20–24). As his mission is to save and not to damn (Jn 3:17), Jesus is unable to do miracles in the face of unbelief lest he increase God's judgment upon people. Jesus, therefore, only does a few miracles but more importantly continues to teach, proclaiming the Word that works faith (Rom 10:17), in order that he might accomplish his Father's mission. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**6:5** *He could not do any miracles there.* It was not that Jesus did not have power to perform miracles at Nazareth, but that he chose not to in such a climate of unbelief (v. 6). (CSB)

Jesus was fully capable of performing miracles in Nazareth, had He wanted to. Yet, He chose not to give any signs of His divinity to those who scoffingly dismissed Him. Jesus' miracles were gifts He freely gave, not proofs demanded of Him (cf 8:11-12). (TLSB)

Mark here observes that Jesus is restricted in his doing of miracles by the situation. Faith may or may not be present among those who see Jesus perform miracles (cf. Mk 4:40), but Jesus generally performed his miracles for the benefit of the faithful, and resistant unbelief hinders God's saving work. God never forces his grace on anyone. He allows people the freedom to reject him. Major miracles would not happen in Jesus' hometown that day because of the self-imposed unbelief of the nonplussed hometown crowd. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 3)

Note the double negative which makes the negative more emphatic. The exception was in the case of a few sick people whom He healed by laying His hands on them. (Buls)

Ylvisaker: Instead of rejoicing over the fact that God has given one of their own family, out of their own midst, gifts and abilities to accomplish something for His honor, the kinsmen and former fellow-citizens will do everything in their power to discredit him. . . Jesus had come with an open hand to distribute from His own bounty and that of His Father. The reception accorded Him shut off the people from the gifts of His mercy. . . . Unbelief always stops the hand of God when He extends it to shower His benefits upon mankind. Unbelief is, therefore, the sin of sins, since it rejects what God is so willing to give in and through Christ. (Buls)

**6:6-7** In contrast to this amazing unbelief, Jesus remains faithful to his Father's mission. He calls his disciples and sends them out to proclaim the coming of the kingdom in word and in deed. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**6:6** *he was amazed.* See note on Lk 7:9. (CSB)

"Amazed" is used thirty times in the Gospels, but only three of these are used with reference to Jesus' amazement. In two instances it speaks of the amazement of Jesus at the faith of the centurion (Matthew 8:10; Luke 7:9) but here, in Mark 6:6 it is used with reference to unbelief. (Buls)

This is a different kind of amazement, with a different Greek verb, than that in v 1. Jesus is amazed at the degree of resistant unbelief. One expects at least a sympathetic hearing from neighborhood people. The fact that their unbelief is underscored emphasizes the entrenched hostility and hints at persecutions yet to come. Despite this

disappointing rejection, Jesus continues on with his teaching ministry. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 3)

THEIR LACK OF FAITH - Apathy and unbelief filled the whole town. Since these were people who had studied their OT in the same synagogue, even as Jesus had when living among them, it is not surprising that our Lord "was amazed at their lack of faith." Knowing the Scriptures, they were without excuse in refusing to acknowledge Him as God's prophet and their Savior. (PBC)

It vividly suggests the degree of resistance He encountered in Nazareth. In verse 5-6a Mark draws attention not to limits of Jesus' power but rather to the privations which result from unbelief. (Lane)

The callous unbelief of Jesus' hometown contrasts starkly with the humble but dogged examples of faith in 2:2-5 and 5:34. (TLSB)

behind you, like preferring the darkness to light. (Buls)

And if the Son of man was amazed at unbelief, is it any wonder that we do the same thing? (Buls)

But the "impossibility" noted in verse 5 was not the fault of Jesus but the sin of the people. Unbelief makes it impossible for God to give. (Buls)

God forces no one into His kingdom. If I am lost it will be my own fault. If I am saved it is totally God's grace and mercy. Hosea 13:9 reads: (Buls)

You are destroying yourself, Israel: but in Me is your help. (Buls)

Jesus had many heartbreaking experiences. But He did not let them stop Him. Look at verse 6<sup>b</sup>. For a similar thought see Hebrews 12:1-11 where the Lord encourages us not to let discipline and suffering keep us from serving the Lord heartily. (Buls)

Unbelief is the sin of sins. Look at Hebrews 3, especially verse 19. It is not the sinner who will be damned, but rather the rejecter. (Buls)

**6:7–13** Jesus had just finished a healing and a teaching tour among the Galilean villages. He had shown his power over devils as he drove them out of a demoniac, over fever as he healed by the touch of his hand, over leprosy as the leper is cleansed, and over palsy as he forgave the paralytic and by a word healed him. Each time he healed, however, Christ also taught the truths concerning the kingdom of God. The miracles were not an end in themselves; they bolstered the proclamation of the Gospel. Just prior



to our text Jesus again healed a demoniac, raised the daughter of Jairus, and cleansed the woman with the flow of blood to show that he truly is the Christ. But the people still didn't believe in him. Adapted from *The Concordia Pulpit for 1979*, pages 185–86, by Rev. Ralph Fischer, Westland, Michigan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Now 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 for mutual support. Regarding their physical needs, Jesus instructs them to depend entirely on him and on those who hear and believe. They are to preach the message of repentance, but the results are always in God's hands. They, like modern preachers, are not to claim credit for success, nor blame themselves for failure; they are simply to proclaim their Lord's message faithfully. Adapted from *The Concordia Pulpit for 1979*, pages 185–86, by Rev. Ralph Fischer, Westland, Michigan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

**6:7** CALLING THE TWELVE – "Called to Himself." Only Matthew mentions "His twelve disciples." Read the parallel accounts in Matthew 10:1-14 and Luke 9:1-6. Matthew gives a fuller account. In fact, Matthew speaks not only of this first trial mission but of their later mission to all the world. (Buls)

HE SENT THEM – *apostellein*, "began to send." Christ "began" to send out the disciples as ambassadors or apostles to preach the Gospel to the Jews. Cf. Matt 10:5–6 which was a preparation for sending them into the world (Matt 18:19–20, Mark 16:16, Luke 24:47). Although their main purpose was to preach, he gave the disciples "authority" to perform various miracles to confirm their preaching, especially over devils who worked against their preaching. With this power they could expel devils from the hearts and lives of men (Mark 6:13 a, Matt 10:1). Adapted from *The Concordia Pulpit for 1979*, pages 185–86, by Rev. Ralph Fischer, Westland, Michigan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

"To send out" is the Greek word for "to apostle," to send out with a very specific commission. (Buls)

Hendriksen gives the reason for sending by twos. (Buls)

- a. To help and courage each other, and
- b. to be valid witnesses.

He notes that later Peter and Paul went out together, Acts. 3:1, Barnabas and Saul, Acts 13:1-3, and Paul and Silas. (Buls)

Since their election the disciples had been with Jesus and had shared His experiences. Private instruction (Ch. 4:11, 34) and exposure to His power over demonic possession, sickness and death (Ch 5) had prepared them for a more direct involvement in His ministry. (Lane)

*two by two.* The purpose of going in pairs may have been to bolster credibility by having the testimony of more than one witness (cf. Dt 17:6), as well as to provide mutual support during their training period. (CSB)

δύο δύο, “two by two” (6:7): It was common at the time to travel in pairs, since travel was dangerous. It may also be, however, for the purpose of witnessing. See Deut 19:15 (also Deut 17:6), which requires at least two credible witnesses to establish any charge. (CC)

AUTHORITY OVER EVIL SPIRITS - *exousian tōn pneumatōn tōn akathartōn*, “authority over the unclean spirits” (ESV). This is the only objective of the commissioning specified in Mark. Matthew (10:1, 7) and Luke (9:1–2) add healing and preaching the kingdom. Jesus’ power over evil spirits is a significant emphasis in Mark. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 3)

ἐδίδου αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν ἀκαθάρτων, “he proceeded to give to them authority over the unclean spirits” (6:7): Authority over unclean spirits is exactly what Jesus has in Mark’s Gospel; indeed, it is apparent in his first mighty work (1:22–27; see also 3:11; 5:1–20; 7:25–30; 9:25–27). Note again the emphasis upon the spiritual dimension in the ministry of the Twelve. (CC)

Jesus had appointed the Twelve (3:13-19); then they were with Him for some time, learning from His teaching and observing how He exercised authority. Now He gives them a more active role in His ministry. Chief among the powers He give them is authority to cast out demons. (TLSB)

The text indicates that the disciples would have authority only when He granted it. This was a given, not a possessed, power. (Buls)

Read Luke 10:1-20 for a clear picture. He Who conquered Satan drove out unclean (evil) spirits. He gave this authority to His disciples, thereby indicated that they were His messengers. This special authority is not promised in the great commission, Matthew 28:18, or at Luke 24:47-49 and Acts 1:8, though at times the apostles exercised special charismatic gifts. This is true, Mark 16:17 notwithstanding. In this passage no specific command is given. (Buls)

In Mark 6:7 nothing is said about preaching (as does Matthew). But it must be implicit in verse 7 because verse 11 speaks about hearing and verse 12 makes plain what they did. (Buls)

**6:8-11** Even in the face of growing hostility toward Jesus, Jesus sends the disciples out, asking them to rely upon the hospitality of others to receive them into their homes. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

**6:8-9** The apostles were to depend wholly upon the kindness of others and the provisions of God. Given the shabby treatment Jesus just received in Nazareth (vv. 1-5), this command must have sounded quite perilous. (TLSB)

**6:8** παρήγγειλεν, “he ordered”: The use of the aorist indicative for a verb of speaking is striking in the first portion of Mark’s Gospel. Perhaps here it conveys as a backgrounding tense that these commands of Jesus are not to be seen as universally valid, i.e., they are in force only for the mission of the Twelve here described. (CC)

*no bread, no bag, no money in your belts.* They were to depend entirely on the hospitality of those to whom they testified (see v. 10). (CSB)

μὴ πήραν, “not a leather pouch” (6:8): This prohibition means that the apostles could not be self-sufficient (CC)

Now a series of commands. Verses 7 and 8 clearly show that first Christ gives and then He commands. (Buls)

Hendriksen: Only that which is absolutely necessary must be taken along on the trip. Why? Because God will provide. To this may be added Matthew 10:10<sup>b</sup>: ‘The worker is entitled to his support.’ (Buls)

Lenski: The orders which Jesus issues are to teach the apostles absolute dependence upon their Lord who sends them out. (Buls)

Luther: They should speak or do nothing for the sake of money, honor, goods. The ministry of the Word seeks something different, has a different object, namely, eternal salvation and the honor of God. (Buls)

**6:9** σανδάλια, “sandals”: This command perhaps forbids more elaborate footwear that covered the entire foot. (CC)

*not an extra tunic.* At night an extra tunic was helpful as a covering to protect from the cold night air, and the implication here is that the disciples were to trust in God to provide lodging each night. (CSB)

μη [ἐνδύσασθαι] δύο χιτῶνας, “not to wear two undergarments/tunics”: To wear two garments was “a style of dress adopted by persons of distinction.” See also Lk 3:11, concerning John the Baptizer’s injunction that a man who has two tunics share one with a man who has none. (CC)

Note that the sentence begins (as was the case in verse 8) with indirect discourse, but changes to direct discourse. (Buls)

Lenski: What Jesus is saying also here in Mark is: 'an extra tunic, extra pair of sandals, and an extra staff must not be taken along.' (Buls)

Bible critics maintain that Mark 6:8-9 and Matthew 19:9-10 contradict each other. (Buls)

Arndt: The difficulty presented by the above texts, when compared with each other, lies in this, that Jesus, according to Matthew, forbids the disciples to equip themselves with a staff, while according to Mark they may take a staff; and that, according to Matthew, they were told not to take shoes, while in Mark Jesus says that they might be shod with sandals. The main factor in harmonizing these statements is the difference between the verbs used. In Matthew the verb is 'provide'; in Mark 'take'. We see that in Matthew Jesus forbids the purchase or acquisition of any equipment; in Mark he speaks not of what they should not provide for themselves, but of what they might take along or not take along on their journey. What the Lord says to the disciples in Mark is practically this: 'God as you are.' They had a staff, this they might take with them; but they should not provide themselves with an additional one. They were shod with sandals, and this they should consider sufficient and not procure more footwear. Hence a careful reading of the two texts reveals that we are not dealing with two conflicting statements, but with two statements which supplement each other and were both spoken when Jesus gave His disciples instructions for their first missionary tour. (Buls)

Lenski: The contradiction is only apparent: no new staff is to be provided. The same is true with regard to the sandals: no new ones are to be bought. The disciples are to go as they are, with such garments, sandals, and walking sticks as they have. . . They are to carry no extra sandals (Matthew) or to buy new ones. (Buls)

The apostles are to take only the bare essentials for their journey. They are not to take money or food with them. Mark indicates that a staff was permitted; Luke and Matthew state that even

it was discouraged. Jesus wanted His disciples to rely on the hospitality of believers for food, shelter and protection. In this way, God would provide for their needs as He provide opportunity for those who heard the Gospel to respond concretely with compassion. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

**6:10** WHENEVER YOU ENTER A HOUSE, STAY THERE – ἐκεῖ μένετε, “remain there”: The apostles were not to be itinerant beggars. Note, however, the contrast also to *Didache* 11–13, in which itinerant prophets are to move on within three days, or they are to be branded as false prophets. (CC)

A new subject is introduced. (Buls)

Hendriksen: How the disciples must decide in which home to stay is answered in Matthew 10:11. It was the duty of the hearers to extend hospitality . . . The spread of the gospel has the priority over personal likes and dislikes. (Buls)

Lenski: The apostles are not to shift from one house to another, as if the first were not good enough for them, and they should a house which offered better food and lodging. (Buls)

Well said. It would be highly offensive if a missionary or pastor gave the impression that he is seeking the best of material goods. This is axiomatic. Note the beautiful construction of the whole sentence. (Buls)

If someone in the village offered lodging, the apostles were to stay with that person as long as they remained in town. They were neither to spread themselves around not to trade up to better quarter. Their presence was a blessing, not a burden to their hosts. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

They were not to dishonor the home by accepting more comfortable provisions offered by another host. (Lane)

**6:11** WILL NOT WELCOME YOU – Verse 10 spoke of the house which "would" receive them. Verse 11 speaks of the house which "would not" receive them. The second verb explains the first: "not hear" explains "does not receive." (Buls)

Hendriksen: What Jesus is here saying, therefore, is that any place whatever, be it a house, village, city, hamlet, that refuses to accept the Gospel must be considered unclean, as if it were pagan soil. Therefore such a center of unbelief must be treated similarly. Paul and Barnabas did exactly that when a persecution was organized against them in the Jewish district of Antioch of Pisidia, Acts 13:50-51. (Buls)

*mēdezētai*, “receives not,” aorist subjunctive of *dexomai*, “to receive as a guest, welcome.” Here the verb *akousōsin* (subjunctive), “to hear,” like *shema* often in the OT, has the added nuance “to hear *and obey*.” It is equivalent to “believe,” for the rejection of the disciples and their message implies unbelief. The parallel verse Matt 10:15 adds that those who thus reject the disciples will receive greater judgment than Sodom and Gomorrah. Those who clearly hear the Gospel message and yet refuse to believe are guilty of a greater sin than those who never hear or those who hear only a partial revelation, though on judgment day all unbelievers alike will be condemned. Those who hear the disciples are encountering the kingdom of God firsthand, since now it has come in the person of Jesus Christ. Adapted from *The Concordia Pulpit for 1979*, pages 185–86, by Rev. Ralph Fischer, Westland, Michigan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

LISTEN TO YOU – akouo - To hear in such a way that also brings obedience. In other words the people were to believe the message not just listen to it. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 1, Part 3)

*shake the dust off your feet*. See note on Mt 10:14. (CSB)

Note from Matthew 10:14 – A symbolic act practiced by the Pharisees when they left an “unclean” Gentile area. Here it represented an act of solemn warning to those who rejected God’s message (see notes on Lk 9:5; Ac 13:51; cf. Ac 18:6). (CSB)

ἐκτινάξατε τὸν χοῦν, “shake off the dust”: To shake dust off is a great insult; it indicates that the person is unwilling to be touched by what others touch. Indeed, Jews returning to Israel after travel abroad regularly shook the dust off their feet.<sup>38</sup> Note the parallel to Acts 13:51, where Paul shakes the dust of Pisidian Antioch from his feet and moves to Iconium. Such dust-shaking seems not to be related to cursing another party (contra Yarbrow Collins) but serves as a warning: “You have rejected our preaching. Therefore, you and all that’s yours are without the reign and rule of God, and we will not be associated with that.” Note that this is another example of the Lord going the extra mile, as it were. *All expressions of judgment are never simply condemnations carried out immediately but linguistic statements that have the illocutionary force of warning to elicit repentance.* (CC)

ektinasso - To shake very violently. This was to be a warning that they have rejected the Gospel and were answerable to God. This was a custom that was common at that time. To shake off the dust from a alien country they were dissociating themselves from the uncleanness of those people.

"As a warning to them." They've been warned because they rejected the Gospel. Christians needs make no apologies for sternly warning people who will not listen to the Gospel. (Buls)

If no one received them and the villagers did not listen, the apostles were to remove the dust of the town's streets from their feet. Mark adds the explanatory comment that this would be a testimony against the town. Since pious Jews carefully removed all the dust of the Gentile lands from themselves and their clothing when they reentered Israel, this action would be a sign to the villagers that they are outside God's kingdom. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

Acts 13:50-51 "But the Jews incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium. (CSB)

**6:12–13** *preached ... drove out many demons.* This mission marks the beginning of the disciples' own ministry in Jesus' name (see 3:14–15), and their message was precisely the same as his (1:15). (CSB)

*ekēruszan*, "they preached" (aorist). The verb *kērusso* means "to proclaim a message as a herald; to make a herald proclamation." The one who so preaches is a representative; he is not free to proclaim his own message, but only the message entrusted to him by the one who authorized his preaching. The same applies to modern preachers. Adapted from *The Concordia Pulpit for 1979*, pages 185–86, by Rev. Ralph Fischer, Westland, Michigan. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

In Mark, the Twelve were originally called to be with Jesus and to be sent out to preach and to cast out demons (3:14–15). Here, then, they are fulfilling the will of God, demonstrating that they are part of the family of God (3:35), having been made so by Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

*karisso* - To proclaim or publish for all to hear or see. To be like a town crier.

The one who so preaches is a representative; he is not free to proclaim his own message, but only the message entrusted to him by the one who authorized his preaching. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 1, Part 3)

**6:12** *repent.* See note on 1:4. (CSB)

Repentance lay at the heart of both John's and Jesus' proclamations of the Kingdom (1:4, 14-15). The Twelve, therefore, continued and extended the ministries of John and Jesus. (TLSB)

ἵνα μετανοῶσιν, "that they/people repent—now!": As observed in the textual note, this is to be related, also grammatically, to Jesus' first preaching (1:15). Note that once again the relation to God and the spiritual dimension is key. (CC)

First they went out. Then they proclaimed. Note that the first item is the preaching of repentance. According to Liddel et al in the *Greek-English Lexicon*, in the classical Greek this word has two meanings: (Buls)

1. To regret;
2. To change one's mind.

As an example of the first, a proverb is quoted: "A wise man thinks ahead so that he need not regret." The second meaning is used in such expressions as: "He planned to go but change his mind." (Buls)

According to Bauer et al in their *Greek-English Lexicon*, the meanings in early Christian literature are: (Buls)

1. To change one's mind, but none of the examples cited are from the New Testament;
2. To have remorse, many examples from the New Testament and the early Christian literature.

Moulton Milligan: Its meaning deepens with Christianity, and in the New Testament it is more than 'repent', and indicates a complete change of attitude, spiritual and moral, towards God. (Buls)

A good example from the Old Testament would be Nathan bringing David to a knowledge of his sin and then absolving him. Then look at Psalm 51. David's entire attitude changed. (Buls)

A good New Testament example is Acts 2:38-42, Pentecost. (Buls)

The Lutheran Confessions always understand the Greek word in the New Testament in the sense of "repent", not "change one's mind." In our day there is much synergistic preaching. People are told to change their minds, to make a decision for Christ. But repentance is a marvelous work of God in man, causing man to realize and confess his sins (law) and then to place his confidence in the merits and worthiness of Jesus Christ (Gospel). (Buls)

Look at verse 12. It means: "They preached that people should repent" not "that people should change their minds." Here in verse 12 the word is used in the wider sense: "To repent and to believe." In Mark 1:15 it is used in the narrower sense. (Buls)



Luther in the first of the 95 Theses, said:

When our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said 'Repent ye' He meant that the whole life of the Christian should be one of repentance. (Buls)

The meaning here is that the message was the message of a herald, not his own message, but the message of the one who sent him. (Buls)

*metanoōsin*, "repent." Not mentioned in Matthew or Luke's parallels. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 3)

**6:13** *anointed many sick people with oil.* In the ancient world olive oil was widely used as a medicine (see Isa 1:6; Lk 10:34; Jas 5:14). (CSB)

Christian fellowships today still practice anointing rituals for healing (Lk. 10:34). (TLSB)

The verb denotes a repeated action. "The sick" are literally "those who have no strength." (Buls)

"Anoint" from which the word Christ is derived, occurs five times and is always used in a metaphysical sense. The thought in 13<sup>b</sup> is found only in Mark. Is this sentence speaking about the medicinal use of olive oil or is it something greater? (Buls)

Ylvisaker: That they anointed the sick with oil has been added by Mark alone. This procedure was not enjoined by the Lord. They did this of their own accord. They employ the rite not to symbolize the redemption power of Jesus or the communication of the Spirit and the awakening of faith, but as a therapeutic agency to alleviate pain . . . It is in harmony with this account of the application of oil by the apostles that the well-known passage, James 5:14, must be interpreted. (Buls)

Lenski and Hendriksen do not accept this interpretation and it is difficult to understand what they mean. They understand the healing as miraculous. (Buls)

Ylvisaker does not. Ylvisaker's interpretation makes good sense and is preferable. In other words, according to Mark, the disciples not only healed miraculously, but also medicinally. They did three things: preached, cast out demons, healed. (Buls)

Critics claim that either Matthew and Luke copied Mark or redacted his Gospel. But the variations between Christ's instructions in Matthew and those in Mark, plus the fact that the last clause in Mark 6:13 is found alone in Mark, indicate that the Gospel writers, in all probability were individual authors, not dependent on one another. (Buls)

Hendriksen: In the wording of Christ's instruction there are a few variations. These suffice to show that even though the Gospel-writers in all probability used written as well as oral sources,

they remained authors or composers, were never merely copyists. Thus in the original Matthew 10:14 and Luke 9:5 use one word for dust, Mark 6:11 another, but in either case "dust" is the proper English translation. So also Matthew mentions 'that house or that city' Mark 'any place' Luke 'that city' but there is no basic difference. Matthew in this connection says nothing about a testimony. Mark has 'shake the dust from the soles of your feet as a testimony to them'; Luke: 'as a testimony against them.' But properly interpreted, the meaning is the same. (Buls)

Oil was commonly used in medical practice, but this anointing seems to have been ceremonial or liturgical rather than strictly medical (see James 5:14). Apparently it served as a visible sign of the Spirit's activity. The OT has ample precedent for the use of oil for anointing, and the Spirit sometimes would come dramatically upon the one anointed with oil (e.g., 1 Sam 10:1, 9-13; 1 Kg 19:15-21; 2 Kg 9) The post-NT church made use of oil in conjunction with Baptism to signify the gift of the Spirit. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

*ēleiphon elaiōi*, "anointed with oil" (ESV). Also only in Mark's account. The oil was not thought to carry miraculous power, but, as a common medicinal application (see Lk 10:34; James 5:14), it would signal the miracle the disciples were about to work. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 3)

**6:7–13** The disciples multiply Jesus' healing and revealing ministry, building on the foundation laid by John the Baptist and anticipating their own ministries, which will bear full fruit after Jesus' ascension. 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. • Lord, give us courage to share Your Word to a dying world in these uncertain times. Open hearts to repentance and faith in the Gospel. Amen. (TLSB)

