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2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10

Mark 6: 1-13

July 5, 2009

United Memorial

I was so excited when I heard that my son Jesus was coming home for a visit.

I had missed him since he started traveling around the countryside.

His brothers and sisters were excited as well... after all, they hadn't travelled much further than our village... they couldn't wait to hear what tales he might have to share with us...

It all started out well at the synagogue... there was much anticipation in the air... you know how it is...

One of our very own come back to teach us...

There was an almost audible buzz in the air... and as he began teaching, people were amazed at the things he said about the realm of God...

And I sat there so proud... Jesus, my first born son, teaching the elders...

But soon... too soon... the mood of the community changed... they started asking questions like, "Who is this guy anyway?"

Where did this man get all this?

What is this wisdom that has been given to him?

What deeds of power are being done by his hands!

Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?"

You see that last question was the biggie... I don't know about in your time, but in our time, family was everything...

It determined everything... where you lived... what your profession would be and who you would marry.

And there was Jesus, gone away from home... getting mixed up with his cousin John the Baptist... and started telling the people in the synagogue that the leaders had it all wrong...

That the kingdom of God was not about blindly following all the rules that had built up over the centuries....

He taught us that the kingdom of God was near at hand and that everything could be summed up in, "Love God and love your neighbour as yourself."

Well, suddenly, those same people that had been so proud of the hometown boy's preaching, suddenly, they were not so proud...

In fact, they were angry...

And I think it was with sorrow that Jesus said, "Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house."

You know we were living under Roman oppression at that time...

And some people wanted a powerful warrior king to lead us... someone like King David... a man who united the north and south kingdoms, who made Jerusalem the City of David, who reigned for 40 years over Israel.

There were comparisons made to King David at first... both he and Jesus came from humble backgrounds... both of them were compelling men...

But, Jesus wasn't a warrior... Jesus preached a message of feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned... basic human needs...

He wasn't about to go overthrowing the Roman government... this angered some people...

He also challenged the elders in the synagogue and that angered them...

And now... his hometown people had turned against him too...

It's a wonder the disciples didn't desert him too!

And you know what happened... all that power that he had for healing was much diminished... although not totally gone, but much diminished...

Your scriptures say that he was amazed at their unbelief...

But apparently he was not discouraged... because he left home again and went about the other villages where his message was heard and appreciated.

Not only was he not discouraged, but realizing that he couldn't do it all himself, he commissioned the disciples, and sent them out to do the same thing: preach, teach and heal.

He gave them strict instructions on how to do it... travel in pairs... travel light... accept the hospitality that is offered on the first night... preach the word to those who will hear...

And do not be disturbed or discouraged by those who are not open to the message...

God hasn't opened their ears yet... go on to the next village.

And they went about the villages, casting out demons and healing many sick.

And it all started with Jesus... well, I guess I can't say it started with Jesus...

We had many prophets over the years who told us how to live in God's way...

My favourite is Micah... who asked, "What does the Lord Require of you? Seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly with your God."

(Remove shawl)

You know, I think there are a few lessons for us in our time...

Ministry is not a solo undertaking...

You remember when Mary told us that without the support of the community Jesus couldn't do much?

Even as I am your minister here, without your support and encouragement, I can do little...

Without my support and encouragement, and you would probably not undertake some things...

But together... together with Jesus... we can do much more than we imagined...

Who would have imagined a year ago that we could have raised almost \$1800 with a concert for the L'Arche community?

Who would have imagined a year ago that we would have a pastoral care team of eight people who have been commissioned to go out in pairs, like the disciples... to preach, teach and heal... through sharing God's word, companionship... and communion... bringing God's community to them.

Who would have imagined that we would have had 6 people take 12 weeks to explore their faith... to wrestle with the big questions and to become closer to God and one another through study and reflection?

In some ways, it seems a bit ironic that in the same week the gospel reading tells of the disciples being sent out in pairs that you I have written a letter inviting you to make a special financial contribution to the work that is taking place on the exterior of our church building.

After all, Jesus never built any places of worship... he went from place to place, often in the open air, sometimes as today, in the synagogue in his home town.

However, this place, this building has been and will continue to be a place from which ministry and mission has taken place for almost 90 years.

This building was and will continue to be a place where people gather each week... where preaching, teaching and healing takes place...

This building was and will continue to be a place from where we Christians go out, into the world to offer something unique to the world.

Acceptance in a world that says how much money you make is the most important thing...

Compassion in a world that is too often cold and heartless...

Hope in a world that can seem so bleak...

Comfort to the sick...

Food for the hungry...

Companionship to the lonely....

Just as Jesus commands us.

Ministry is not a solo undertaking... Jesus couldn't do it alone, I can't do it alone...

Together, we can... Thanks be to God, amen.

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