

MARK 6:7–13. (EHV)

Jesus called the Twelve and began to send them out two by two. He gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He instructed them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their money belts. They were to put on sandals but not to wear two coats. He said to them, **“Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that area. Any place that will not receive you or listen to you, as you leave there, shake off the dust that is under your feet as a testimony against them.”** They went out and preached that people should repent. They also drove out many demons. They anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

In a way, this Gospel is a difficult text to preach on because this was not the regular call the apostles would later have. This was a one-time mission that had some one-time instructions. For instance, God does not require all public ministers not to bring any bread, bag, or money or not to wear two coats when accepting a call to a new place.

Nevertheless this Gospel does speak about the public ministry and give us some expectations of public ministers, expectations which are confirmed elsewhere in the Scriptures. So let’s walk through this account and look at some expectations that believers should have for public ministers of the gospel, both their own and public ministers in general.

1. Called

The first expectation of public ministers is that they are called by God to do what they do. “Jesus called the Twelve and began to send them out...” This is so important especially in our culture, because in the religious circles of our culture, including Christian ones, if someone were to ask a random preacher, “How do you know you are called by God to do this for a living?” what do you think would be the typical answer? I don’t know what the exact wording would be, but probably something about a strong feeling, or a strong urge, or a strong pull, or a strong desire, right? Well, as one of my professors used to say, what if that strong feeling was just digestion? Or what if it was from the devil?

There are two kinds of calls from God—direct calls and indirect calls. Direct calls are just that—God directly calls you, whether in a vision or dream or in person, as happened with the twelve apostles here. Jesus the Son of God called them and sent them out. But notice what he did for them even then, so that people could be assured that God had called them: “He gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ... They drove out many demons. They anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.” In other words, the authority of their direct call was confirmed by signs. Jesus also did this for the apostles after he ascended; he gave them the power to perform miracles.

So their audience was first and foremost to compare their teaching and preaching to the Scriptures, and then, even if it otherwise lined up perfectly, he made it so that they could validate their divine call to share the message in a public and representative way by miracles. Why? What would happen if their teaching and preaching otherwise lined up perfectly with God’s word but they hadn’t actually been divinely called to teach and preach? That would set a precedent whereby any Christian could suddenly claim to be a preacher or teacher, and there would be

confusion and a lack of order in the church, just as there is in much of the visible Christian church today. And God is not a God of disorder, but of peace.

So how can we have good order in the church today? That's why there are also indirect calls. Jesus said, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name," namely to make God-pleasing decisions pertaining to his kingdom, "there am I with them." One application of this is that if two or more believers in Christ call someone to be their pastor, Jesus himself is also issuing him a call to be their pastor.

I remember seeing a news special once about a child preacher who would preach in parking lots with the support of his father. I felt sorry for the boy; it was clear that his father was manipulating him for attention and personal gain. But what I felt even more sorry for was when the news team reporting the phenomenon pursued this very good question: Who or what gave the boy the authority to preach? The boy and his father answered by simply pointing to the boy's speaking ability and charisma and his strong desire to preach. But then the news team inquired of an older pastor who didn't think the boy had authority to preach. He said that a person's authority and divine call to preach arise out of personal experience. There were people misleading people all over the place!

What gives me the authority to preach in this pulpit? This call letter does. *You* do. Since you Christians have called me to preach, Jesus has called me to preach. My school diploma is nice; it's one of the reasons you called me to preach, but by itself it doesn't give me the authority to preach and teach. I need a call, and you gave it to me, and thereby Jesus gave it to me. And all pastors and preachers and teachers in the Church should have a call.

2. Accompanied

The second expectation is that they are accompanied. "[Jesus] began to send them out *two by two*..." Now this isn't an explicit command that every congregation should have two pastors, but Jesus is showing that he doesn't want any pastor to be an island to himself and to try to go it alone. If a pastor is such a visionary that he's the only expert and the only one doing ministry his way, then he's not a visionary and not an expert. We need accountability. We need to double-check with each other on certain things. We need comfort. We need encouragement. We need correction. We need others who can relate to what we're going through. Seminars, circuit meetings, conferences, conventions, and other retreats, get-togethers, and meetings with pastors outside of the formal and official stuff are all important. Public ministers should be accompanied.

3. Supplied (But Not Greedy)

The third expectation is that they should be supplied, but not greedy. "He instructed them to take nothing for their journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in their money belts. They were to put on sandals but not to wear two coats. He said to them, 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that area.'" Jesus's apostles definitely were not to be greedy, were they? They shouldn't be in it for the money. As Peter later wrote, they should not be eager for money, but eager to serve. But you know as well as I as you look around at plenty of preachers today what they are in it for. And even if they're not making a lot of money, greed and discontent can still exist in the heart. And as one gets older and becomes more acquainted with the world and its ways—I speak from experience—it's so easy to have some of those ways rub

off on you. It's so easy for it to become more and more about the money. But it shouldn't be. Pray that God would douse the flames of greed in public ministers.

And yet, if they're not to take any bread, bag, or money along, where are they going to get those things? They're obviously going to get them from the people who host them and the people they preach to and teach. Jesus wants them to be readily supplied with what they need. All Christian congregations should supply the needs of their pastors. Ministers should be supplied. And by the way, it is clear that you understand this expectation, because you have well supplied myself and my family, and I thank you for that.

4. Unbiased

The fourth expectation is that they are unbiased. "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that area." Do you see what Jesus is doing there? He's not just providing them an avenue for receiving food and shelter, though that's part of it. He's also teaching them not to show favoritism or partiality. Can you imagine if, as two apostles preached the gospel in a certain village, they got to know people better and, as happens, their personalities jibed better with some than with others? Can you imagine if one day they returned to their hosts' house, packed up their belongings, and told them, "We're going to go stay with the Dershowitzes across town." What impression would that give? What impact would that have on their hosts? On everyone else who heard about it? It kind of goes back to the previous point and touches on greediness. "We want to have the easiest and most pleasant life possible, no matter what impression is given or how it might affect our preaching and how it is received. And so we're going to give more attention to those people than these people."

Pastors and teachers shouldn't be biased. It used to be, a couple generations ago, that pastors in our circles simply wouldn't make any friends with members of their congregation in order to keep from being biased or giving the impression of being biased. Nowadays it's much more common for pastors to make friends with certain members. Neither is right or wrong in and of itself. The danger of the one is that you're not able to relate to anybody, because people perceive you as cold and distant, not to mention that you might feel more alone. The danger of the other is that you give your friends preferential treatment and wink at their sins while rebuking them in others. Whatever pastors or teachers decide to do in this area, they should not be biased, just as our Savior is not biased.

5. Bold

The fifth expectation is that they are bold. Did you stop to think about when Jesus did this? This happened right after last week's Gospel. Rejection in Nazareth. Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith. The citizens even took Jesus to the brow of the hill with the intention of throwing him off, according to Luke. And now a few days later perhaps, Jesus turns to his disciples: "How would you like to do what I do?" Well, they're going to need boldness, aren't they!

Not only that, but consider these instructions: "Any place that will not receive you or listen to you, as you leave there, shake off the dust that is under your feet as a testimony against them." In other words, if the message doesn't receive a warm welcome, don't just run off to a different town without any notice; don't try to sneak away under cover of darkness. No, openly testify to them that not even the dust from their city should cling to the feet of the representatives

of Christ. They should testify that God had rejected those villagers and would continue to do so as long as they did not repent. That takes boldness.

Not to mention the message itself. “They went out and preached that people should repent.” You can’t preach the gospel and the message that there is a Savior to repent to, who gives eternal life in heaven as a free gift (which they doubtless did proclaim), until you first preach the law and tell people they are sinners one and all who deserve eternal punishment in hell by nature. Oof! The church’s pastors and teachers need to be bold. They would preach the message clearly to those who like it *and* to those who don’t.

6. Equipped

The final expectation is that public ministers are equipped to do what God has called them to do. It is simply a fact that God equips those whom he calls. “Jesus called the Twelve and began to send them out two by two. He gave them authority over the unclean spirits. . . . They went out and preached that people should repent. They also drove out many demons. They anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.” God equips whom he calls. That’s why we should expect it.

However, we shouldn’t just expect all of these things. Public ministers are humans with a sinful nature too, just like you, just like everyone else. Jesus is always faithful on his end, but they are not always faithful on their end. So pray for these things. Pray that your public minister, that all public ministers, would be called, accompanied, supplied, unbiased, bold, and equipped. Pray that regularly. Pray that, so that the Church has a good reputation and so that more people are drawn to it. Pray that, so that all the people who gather around the gospel with that public minister see not so much that public minister, but Jesus—

Jesus who was called and appointed by God the Father;
Jesus who chose to be in the company of humans, who chose to need the company of humans;
Jesus who was not greedy, but eager to serve;
Jesus who did not and does not show favoritism, but who loves and died for and shepherds all in his flock exactly as they need;
Jesus who was bold in preaching and teaching the truth, even to the point of death;
Jesus who was equipped to complete his mission—

all for the salvation of the world, all for our salvation, all so that we would know and believe the God of grace and forgiveness and inherit eternal life, all so that we would not be sheep without a shepherd.

So please, don’t just expect these things of public ministers. Keep public ministers of the gospel in your prayers. Ask that these things would be true of me; ask that they would be true of all public ministers of Christ, for Christ’s sake and to his glory alone, not ours. Amen.