

Let's Not be Cynics!

King of Glory Lutheran Church

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Year B: Pentecost 7: **Mark 6:1-13**

<sup>1</sup> [Jesus] came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him.<sup>2</sup> On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, "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! <sup>3</sup> 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?" And they took offense at him. <sup>4</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house." <sup>5</sup> And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. <sup>6</sup> And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. <sup>7</sup> He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. <sup>8</sup> He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; <sup>9</sup> but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. <sup>10</sup> He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. <sup>11</sup> If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them." <sup>12</sup> So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. <sup>13</sup> They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

*Jesus' instructions to us might be slightly different than to the first disciples. But the hope is the same: God's Kingdom is still breaking into the world! Therefore, repent, pray, read scripture, keep the faith, let our Baptismal lights shine. Let's not be cynics!*

Every once in awhile, I'd hear my Grandmother say, "This world is going to hell in a handbasket." The sky is falling, the sky is falling, the world is headed for disaster!

I'm guessing many of us have had this thought in moments of deep frustration. We all get permission to feel this way once in awhile. But it sounds rather cynical, yes? The origin of a Cynic is from the Greek word *kyon* meaning 'dog' at a time when dogs were more often vermin than pets. Like dogs barking, 'cynics' were wandering philosophers who would bark at respectable people. They would beg

for their bread all the while teaching that the present world was just a sham. Cynics didn't believe that anything was going to change. The world was just one huge disaster, going to hell in a handbasket. (NT Wright. Mark for Everyone. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville KY. 2004.Pg 60)

The disciples whom Jesus sent out two by two, might have appeared like these cynics. Take no bread, money, no extra tunic, just go! Jesus sent them out with urgency as there was no time to waste. But it wasn't because the world was one big mess. No! It was because God's Kingdom was beginning to break in. Jesus had arrived! Love had come! Healing had come! All people were valued and honored! No one was to be left out.

It's fascinating that when Jesus was at His hometown, He couldn't do any work of great power there. Familiarity had bred contempt with Jesus' previous neighbors and friends. Their cynical minds weren't open to what He had to say. But Jesus gave the disciples authority. He gave them power. That power opened the minds of those they encountered. The disciples were able to cast out demons! They healed the sick!

Yet before the healings, the first message to their new audience was one of repentance. Why would repentance be important? Repentance opens us up to new possibilities. Repentance acknowledges that we're not going down the right path and there is something better for us. Repentance involves not only our heads but our actions. We decide to change and then follow up with our actions.

Some people prefer not to change. In truth, our brains prefer not to change. They like stability and predictability. That's why its so difficult to make behavioral changes. Think about new year's resolutions. We decide with our minds, but if our behavior doesn't follow it just won't work.

Cynics stay stuck. Cynics say, "Nothing new under the sun. I can't and I won't try. Because the world is hopeless. Nothing will change."

We might feel hopeless when we get overwhelmed. Our minds and spirits say, "there is too much to fix. Too many lost people. There are too many problems with too few solutions. I don't know where to begin. I feel inadequate."

Repentance first. The heart of repentance is an act of God because every problem is a spiritual problem. The world is not hopeless! Because God is still at work in it! Let's not be cynics! When God does the work of repentance in our hearts, the change will stick. St. Paul in Romans said, "You are a new creation!" A new creation in God.

This week on the radio, there was a story of a man who was baptized at his church in a river. A friend kept telling him about Jesus. The man realized his actions towards his wife and children and employer weren't acceptable. God loved him and wanted him to love. There was another way to live and he repented. His ten-year-old daughter stood on the beach the day her dad was baptized and tears streamed down her cheeks. She knew that a different man would walk into their house. She knew real changes were coming. God's kingdom come! (Story from KLOVE radio. Week of July 1, 2024)

The world is not hopeless! Because God is still at work in it! We know that because 2000 years since Jesus' resurrection, there are millions of Christians following His way of life! The world is not hopeless because I watched you bring toiletries for homeless youth in Loveland. Now we are going to feed the hungry. This is God's Work through our Hands. It's not "our work, our hands." No!

The living God works, and walks, and speaks and prays through you and I. God's kingdom breaks in through us! Therein lies our true hope! There is plenty of God's good in our world. If we aren't looking for it, we won't see it. Yet, there are millions of people doing fabulous acts each and every day because of their faith and God's calling in their lives. Doctors and nurses, parents and grandparents, teachers and custodians, pilots and scientists and garbage collectors and zookeepers...all doing their part in God's work in the world.

One of those stories is about Peercys. A natural disaster might be the most overwhelming experiences of life. Not for them!

In December 2023, after 27 years of serving disaster-ravaged communities around the country, Dale and Jean Percy retired from volunteering with Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR). Their work with LDR took them to 49 of 50 states, influenced the design and implementation of national long-term recovery systems, inspired the establishment of community-based response organizations and created foundations for recovery work that will last for years to come.

This couple both began their careers in construction. But after much success, realized they wanted to live their faith. Their work with LDR led them to the Virgin Islands, South Dakota and Texas. One project was with people living with hearing loss. "I was a little worried," Dale said. "But we learned the homeowner had experience working with the hearing-impaired, and it was like

God already had a plan for us. All we had to do was walk it through.” God’s work and ways are here! We cannot lose hope!

<https://www.livinglutheran.org/2024/05/a-legacy-of-service/>

If Jesus gave us instructions for heading out to preach and heal, they wouldn’t be the same instructions as He gave the first disciples. Ministry is always contextual. What instructions would Jesus give us for doing God’s Work in 2024?

1. Pray. Being connected to God in relationship through prayer. What do you need me to do? Where do you need me to serve?
2. Bible reading. Being connected to God in relationship through scripture. What does the Word tell me about God? What does the Word tell me about myself and my community?
3. Trusting with mustard seed faith and hope. God can use a tiny bit and take it a long way. It will keep us from becoming cynics.
4. Let your Baptismal light shine. Use what God gave you. Your passions and gifts. Don’t hide them! Be proud of them.

Amen!