

St. Andrew's Anglican Church, Douglas, GA

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commings+ Rector

Scripture: Mark 6:7-13

"Chosen"

How good are you at following directions? Does it depend on who is giving the directions? It might depend on the conditions that you are being given them. Moses was very used to being given directions and following them – after all God told him exactly how he wanted the Tent of Meeting and the Ark of the Covenant, as well as all of the contents for the Tabernacle to be made. When God gives instructions – He expects them to be followed to the letter. Moses did, and we can read of that proof.

But there was another time, God instructed Moses and Aaron in Numbers 20:7-8 to take the staff and go speak to the rock to produce water. Earlier God, in Exodus 17:5-7 instructed Moses, *"Walk on ahead of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink."* This time, God told them – but apparently Moses was lost in thought or something, *"Take the staff, and you and your brother Aaron gather the assembly together. Speak to that rock before their eyes and it will pour out its water. You will bring water out of the rock for the community so they and their livestock can drink."* (Numbers 20:8) There are distinct differences in the instructions – but – Moses did not follow the directions and he struck the rock twice. God brought forth water anyway – but – for his disobedience God warned Moses with these words, *"the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them."* (Numbers 20:12) The question I would love to ask Moses is, "was it worth it?" How many of us like to do things our way – because we know better? Maybe it is just being naïve or we have an experience and we are going to do it our way because that is what we learned. That was what Mama or Daddy taught us. We have to be very careful to listen to God's instructions.

When God tells you to follow His instructions, He is not fooling around! Our Lord Jesus, in today's Gospel reading from Mark, *"these were his instructions: "Take nothing for the journey except a staff--no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. 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."* (Mark 6:8-11) If they were not welcomed, or His message was not received – then they were to treat these people as if they were unclean pagans.

Being obedient, the Apostles preached repentance, drove out demons and healed many sick people. Jesus gave them authority: the "right" and the "power" over evil spirits. What they would do would authenticate their preaching, and their authority. Remember, these were not just some guys off the street, but these were men who worked very closely with Jesus, handpicked, and knew that His power extended far beyond His personal presence. His

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, July 11, 2021, Year B

instructions were very real. This was not negotiable – and they had to hurry to do the job that Jesus had given them. This was truly the coming of the Kingdom of Almighty God.

Jesus' detailed instruction to the disciples to go out "two by two" was a call specifically meant for that particular point in time - facing the coming crisis, the greatest crisis, the death of Jesus on the cross. I am thinking of instructions. You see then Peyton gets up to the plate (he is a big baseball player – as is his brother Asher) and the third base coach gives them a sign, to maybe bunt or take a pitch, what happens if they don't follow those instructions? Then the coach would not be very happy with you! IT is very, very important – you cannot fine a 10- or 12-year-old – but you can help them to learn better. Jesus gave instructions as well to the church. He stood on a mountain in the Galilee telling the apostles, and us to go and baptize in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as teach them to obey everything that He commanded. In other words, Jesus was telling them to tell others to follow His instructions. We are well aware that the church itself would be faced with crisis after crisis at various points throughout its history ever since. Part of true Christian discipleship is the spiritual sensitivity and discernment to know when there is an emergency – and then - what to do regarding it. We only need to look at the world around us to recognize the importance of Jesus' message – and spreading it.

Think about it, if Jesus sent His Apostles out into Coffee County with those same instructions, how many times would they be shaking the dust off their sandals?

I want to remind you of the words that Jesus spoke in John 15:16, *"you did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last."* Each one of us have been called, like the twelve apostles, to tell people that the world is heading rapidly in the wrong direction – and to show to the world that evil has been defeated through Jesus Christ and can be defeated again today – by standing on His Holy Word. Our focus has got to be on Jesus' work - on Jesus' message – without delay.

We are making plans for our Vacation Bible School – "The Treasure of the Chosen Ones." That means all of you! We will meet next Sunday, July 18th through Friday, July 23rd in the Parish Hall. You will see all of the times and dates in your Parish Life. Not only have you been chosen, but you are invited to come and take part, eat, have fun, share, and learn – with us. We will have discussions about what we have learned – and more importantly we will be able to share with others how they can see what we have seen, and learn what we have learned – from the comfort of their own home – free! Let me show you a little bit of what we have in store for you – this week. Please enjoy this brief video – and be sure to register for the VBS today.