

Mark 6:1-13 (NRSV)

1 He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him.

2 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!"

3 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.

4 Then Jesus said to them, "Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house."

5 And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. 6 And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went about among the villages teaching. 7 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

8 He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; 9 but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.

10 He said to them, "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place.

11 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." 12 So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent.

13 They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

Beyond the Visible Things

Recently, we lost some of our beloved members to the kingdom of God. Mr. Lee, an active member of our Korean ministry, passed away. Ruth Starkins, a valued soprano singer in our English services, also passed away. A member of our family, Mrs. Gloria Kluger, is also resting in God's arms.

May God's grace be abundant for those who are grieving due to the loss of their loved ones at this time. Our prayers and thoughts are with you.

I share these stories in two different languages.

So, Korean members won't recognize the name of Ruth Starkins during this Korean-language sermon.

At the same time, you won't recognize the name of Mr. Lee (Chu). Though you may not recognize their names, you may have met them at one of our outdoor services.

Both of them have done their best to serve our congregations in two different ministries.

As both of them went home to God around the same time, I spent the next two weeks naturally thinking about death.

When I officiate at funerals, I have heard stories about the deceased person's life from family and friends and, of course, I have my own stories of the deceased.

We Christians believe that there is no eternal death, but only eternal life in God.

That's why we say that death is not the end, but the beginning.

At the same time, we believe our beloved family members who have left their earthly life are listening to us because they have left their limited bodies and become spirits in the kingdom of God..

I think there is a lot of truth to the cultural response that we can only speak the truth in the face of death.

So often at funerals, when family members or people are telling stories, I wonder what the deceased, who are now with God, are thinking when they hear what people are saying.

"That's so true!"

"Oh, I didn't realize that."

"Thank you for saying only good things."

I thought about what the deceased would say about the various comments that are made as we recall their gifts and graces on this earth..

Also, funerals are the place where we forgive bad memories, apologize to those we could not help, and share good memories with the people.

Then, I wondered what people would say when they saw me at my funeral.

Of course, those words would be the words I would only hear when I become [the]a deceased person.

So, I won't hear until I am still alive.

Death happens to everyone equally. No matter how much money or possessions we have, how famous we are, or how healthy we are, we can't escape death. Therefore, all of us will surely hear ourselves at a funeral someday.

Maybe, we live our lives just to hear people evaluate you and me after we die.

If we think, "This is what people will say about me when I die," will our behavior and attitudes change? Or would they stay the same?

This week, especially because I was spending time meditating about Chu Lee and Ruthie, I spent time on the edge between death and life. So I feel that I was able to meditate on this morning's text in a slightly different way.

At the beginning of Mark's gospel, we read about Jesus going to his hometown, where his people reject Jesus.

And we remember from previous chapters that Jesus' family also thought Jesus was crazy.

Perhaps the idea is that the people in Jesus' hometown or Jesus' family recognized Jesus based on what they knew of Him as He was growing up and before His ministry began. They remembered Him as a young boy or as a young man working beside Joseph in his carpentry shop.

And that's why they rejected his teachings.

From the perspective of the people in Jesus' hometown, they might be right in saying "What would Jesus, a carpenter, do?"

Even though the disciples had probably heard all His family and neighbors said about Him and even went through many of these experiences together, the disciples stayed with Jesus.

Even with these preconceived notions fully in place, the attitude of the twelve disciples stayed the same. They continued their master's teachings.

The 12 disciples were sent out by Jesus to spread the word.

They preach the gospel, heal the sick, and cast out demons.

I think that's probably the way Jesus was, not afraid of even death.

This is the life of Jesus, who was not afraid of death, and this is the life of his disciples, who imitated him.

The visible Jesus may seem to have been a very humble man.

But it was the teaching behind the scenes that gave His disciples the ability to carry on His ministry. And it wasn't because Jesus was a cowardly man who hung on every word people said. Rather, Jesus was very confident as He carried out his mission on earth. He was more confident, even in the face of His own death. And He made death seem insignificant, something that has been feared throughout human history. That's what drove His disciples to make more disciples, and that's what led to the birth of the Church, which follows Jesus' teachings as the Word of God.

Let's wrap up today's message. If we think we're afraid of death, we're slaves to death. We may end up living a less than productive and effective life, not really living at all. But if we read death as resurrection and life in Jesus, we will no longer fear life and death. And we will have the courage to live life completely. If we treat death as part of God's eternal plan for us, maybe we can live our lives a little more confidently as we prepare ourselves for eternal life in the kingdom of God, because death is not the end.

Let us pray.

As we fear death, so we fear the life we live. Lord, we pray.

Help us to know Your ways; help us to follow the path of Your teachings, which have shown us that death is not the end but a part of life.

We share with the people the pain of losing their loved ones.

But we will meet again. When we meet again, may we have the courage to share with our happiness with one another. And we will say, "Our human journey was well done."

We ask this in the name of Jesus, who made the most feared thing, death, insignificant.
Amen.