

## **Mark 6:7-13**

When the ark came to rest on Mt. Ararat and God opened its door, they all came out - Noah and his family and all the animals. And it would have been just like before when they all entered the ark...two by two. One male and one female of all the animals. And even with Noah and his family...Noah and his wife, their three sons and their wives. God sent all of these out of the ark with the clear command to multiply and fill the earth. And this is why He sent them out in pairs: two by two.

And so now in our Gospel text for today we have the same story before us, but told a little differently. Jesus sends out His twelve disciples. They have been cooped up, we can say, in the ark with Jesus. They have been in close quarters doing everything together. But now Jesus opens the door of this ark. It's time for His disciples to go out, to multiply and fill the earth with the Gospel.

As Noah and his family, and all the animals, left the ark...over time the earth again teemed with life. And it's because God sent them out two by two. And thus we see Jesus sending out His disciples two by two.

It's an adventure. They will encounter obstacles, challenges. There will be towns and villages where the people will simply refuse to listen to the message the disciples bring. But there will also be those who will listen and receive the Gospel message in hearts full of faith.

This is how it would have been back in the days after the Great Flood. Going out to raise families and fill the earth would have been very challenging. There was safety in the ark. True, they were cooped up, caged we can say. Yet they had grown accustomed to this way of life. Now, as Noah's family and the animals go out into the new world, there are indeed many positives, but also many dangers and many difficulties.

But look how God blessed them. Multiply and fill the earth they did. And so on this day, many centuries later, there is life, both human and animal, in all places around the globe.

Two by two. This is God's design. It's how He filled the earth with life. And it's how He fills the earth with the life we have in Christ. It's how you were brought to life...in both of these ways. You had a mom and a dad who obeyed God's command to multiply. And so here you are. Your life, your existence is due to God's design. Two by two they came out of the ark, and this is how you and I came to be.

But not only that, your existence in Christ, your life in His church is also because of God's beautiful two by two design. Mom and Dad gave you life, but through them also...through their bringing you to Holy Baptism, and through their raising you in the Christian Faith, you have life in union with Jesus and His church.

And no matter where you are in this life, it too is an adventure. There are pitfalls, hidden dangers, and great temptations. The disciples encountered many demons as they went out two by two. Those demons still exist today. They go where there are people. Are there demons around us? Well, here is a simple test. Is there sin, sickness, and death around us and with us? Then there are also demons. Where you have one, you have the others.

Is this reason to fear? No. Jesus gives authority, says our text, to His disciples, and they cast out the demons, just as they heal the sick and forgive sinners who repent. And so for you also, where sins are forgiven, nothing can separate you from Christ. Not sickness, not death, not all the demons.

Yet these do create obstacles for us. Is this not why we see the wisdom in God's two by two design? Through a Christian father and mother God raises Christian children. Not one, but two in the home are put there by God to multiply the Christian Faith to their children. To multiply it takes two. The Bible says that two witnesses are required to establish every fact. And so in the home God puts His two witnesses, so that through them the children are blessed in every way in body and in soul. And in this way the children learn to continue the pattern. They learn to seek a Christian spouse so that the Faith is multiplied also through them to their children.

And there's more. There is safety in God's two by two design. While in the ark no one had reason to fear. But when they all left the ark, there were threats and dangers of every kind. For this reason also God sent them out in pairs...both man and animals...to protect each other, to help each other.

The danger for us is that we think we can stand alone. We can protect ourself. We can help ourself. And worst of all, we think we can keep ourself in the faith. But no one can. God's design is two by two, not one by one. Together Christians stand in the faith; not alone. To go it alone is not how God sent everyone out of the ark. It's not how He sent out His disciples. And it's not how He designed families.

There is one who did go it alone. Jesus. He walked the way of suffering alone. He alone went to the cross. No one could help Him. None were able to protect Him. He alone bore the sins of the world. He died all alone. But because He did, you are never alone. For Jesus, it was one by one; for you it is always two by two.

And if you, my dear friend, feel all alone; if you are not a pair in your life, but are by yourself; if you are not with a Christian spouse to multiply the faith to your children, take heart...do not fear. In your baptism Jesus united Himself to you so that in all that you do, you do it in connection with Him. And in your baptism Jesus joined you to His church. He gave you a pastor. He gave you a church family.

And so you are not in life alone. Right here in this room you have those God sends to protect you and to help you, and also to keep you in the faith. And sometimes this requires a rebuke. Sometimes a warning. And always it requires love. And always, my friend, it is about the Gospel. The Gospel that Jesus is filling the earth with...is for you - the Gospel of forgiveness. You are one for whom Christ died and rose again. You are one who is declared forgiven by your loving God.

See Jesus in your pastor. See Jesus in the elders and fellow members, just as all of us see Jesus in you. He is the one who puts us together. He is the one who blesses us as we go through life two by two. Amen.