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Zion Lutheran Church, Lewistown, MT  
7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost, Year B

Mark 6:1-13

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

For the past several months we have included these *Taking Faith Home*<sup>i</sup> pages in our bulletins. And like many things, the more familiar they are the less important they can become.

Let's take a look at them again to see what kinds of resources this page provides.

On one side we have a list of Bible readings for each day of the week. Further down that side is a scripture verse to center your daily living on throughout the week. And then there are simple prayers and blessings.

On the opposite side we find a hymn of the week. Sometimes we choose this hymn for our Sunday worship, and sometimes we don't. But if we don't just about all of them can be found on YouTube. If we do, you can use your bulletin to reflect on the words of that hymn.

Finally we have the 4 Keys of Faith Formation—Caring Conversation, Devotions, Service, and Rituals & Traditions. If you have time for it you can go through this side all at once or take one key a day throughout the week.

Now, I certainly do not expect that everyone would use every resource on these pages. It's more like a menu to choose from. The idea is to make time throughout the week to read, reflect, and pray in order to be equipped as disciples of Jesus.

The point is literally to take your faith home with you—to make use of the time we spend together here in worship by bringing it into your daily lives.

Why? Why would this be important? Our lives are busy. There are enough requirements and we have enough responsibilities with hard and fast deadlines. Why add one more thing?

Because Jesus sends us from here to love and serve the Lord by loving and serving others in our daily lives.

Today's gospel reading is the sending of the twelve disciples out to do the work Jesus had been doing—preaching, teaching, healing, and even casting out demons. But he knows that they may or may not be welcomed by those they meet.

Some will receive them, just as some have received and even sought out Jesus, some will be skeptical, and others will outright reject them. Just as the world has done unto Jesus, the world will do unto his followers.

When Jesus sends the disciples to the tasks of ministry, he pairs them up. Ministers are not meant to be lone rangers. We serve in partnership and in relationship with one another. The beauty of the church is that we have a whole bunch of people to partner with!

We also have our family members and our friends. Even our Stephen Ministers who meet with their care receivers one-on-one come back together on a regular basis for support and encouragement from one another.

Jesus tells them to travel light—take only a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, wearing sandals and only one tunic. What might these instructions mean for us as disciples and ministers today?

Take only a staff—this would be something to support us as we venture out into the world. For us that is God’s word. Our *Taking Faith Home* pages give us a list of daily Bible passages. As you read the passage for the day, think about what you can take with you from that reading to support and sustain you in your life of faith that day.

Bring no bread, no bag, no money—in this instruction the first disciples were meant to rely on the hospitality of those they met, trusting that God would provide for their needs. For us, bread, bags, and money might be the things we place our trust in above God.

The bread could represent whatever we use to satisfy ourselves. Luther described daily bread as “all we need for this earthly life.” But we often interpret that to be all that we “want” for this earthly life—then our daily bread becomes whatever we use to indulge and overfeed ourselves, sometimes at the expense of others.

The bag could be the baggage that weighs us down. That might be actual stuff, all the extras in life that really end up becoming a burden. We have friends visiting us this week who have downsized from a large house to a 37 foot RV. They talk about how getting rid of some of their collectables and extra clothing was like taking a weight off their shoulders. Some of you have moved from house to apartment or assisted living and know how much physical stuff we caring around and these transitions become daunting tasks.

What other baggage weighs you down? Worry, fear? Do you carry around the expectations—real or imagined—that other people have for you? Are you taking on responsibilities that are not yours to manage? In the church some of the ways we’ve always done things can weigh us down from moving forward into new and more relevant ways of serving as Christ’s Body in the world.

And Jesus says to the disciples take no money. If they had money, they could have checked in to the local inn, fed themselves, and taken care of their every need. Instead, Jesus calls them to rely on the hospitality of others. Ministry is a reciprocal thing, it is a partnership between both the minister and those who receive their care. Being a good host is important. Being a good guest honors the host, and in this case, trusts that God has gone ahead to prepare a place for the ministers.

For us, much of our mission work is done through our financial contributions. These are certainly important. But if we took Jesus' direction for us today, we can see that he is also sends us out to do ministry. Without money to give we need to minister in person, face to face, with our own hands.

Wear sandals. Be ready to walk, to go the distance in your life of discipleship. Again, the sending we are given at the end of the service is to be lived out in person with others, whether that's in our homes and families, at work, at school or the playground, or serving in any number of ways in our community.

And finally, don't wear two tunics! I have a feeling this has something to do with status. Here, Jesus might be telling us to leave behind our brand names and labels. Jesus wants us to be approachable to those we minister to.

The sending of the twelve follows the story of Jesus in his hometown where he was met with doubt and skepticism. He ends his commissioning of the twelve with these instructions: "Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 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."

Jesus had been rejected by those who knew him best. The disciples will encounter both welcome and rejection. Jesus is realistic about that. Sometimes that rejection for us will come at home. The kids or a spouse may not want to participate in a caring conversation or read a daily scripture passage with you. Your faithfulness to your own devotional reading and prayer time may be the witness they will eventually receive.

But when we are rejected, or we feel like our blessings are falling on deaf ears, it's OK to leave the transformation of that heart to God for some future disciple to minister to.

Jesus was rejected more than once in his life. The ultimate rejection took place on the cross. Yet God made a way for our salvation through that rejection.

Our time of worship here is not an injection of faith that is meant to sustain us throughout the week. Every day we are to join with the psalmist as we lift up our eyes to the One enthroned in the heavens, seeking both God's mercy and God's guidance for the day.

Now, hold up your *Taking Faith Home* page, put it in your purse or you pocket and give these resources a try. Let the sending of the twelve be a renewal of our sending as ministers of Christ each day.

Let us pray. Lord, your grace is all we need. Help us to rely on you as we live as your followers each and every day. Amen

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<sup>i</sup> *Taking Faith Home* is a resource published by Milestones Ministry. Zion Lutheran has a subscription to this resource which is placed in the bulletins each Sunday.