

Sermon “Your Bone & Flesh”

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2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10

Mark 6:1-13

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2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10 (NRSV)

^{5:1}Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron, and said, “Look, we are your bone and flesh. ²For some time, while Saul was king over us, it was you who led out Israel and brought it in. The Lord said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over Israel.” ³So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron; and King David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the Lord, and they anointed David king over Israel. ⁴David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. ⁵At Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months; and at Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years.

⁹David occupied the stronghold, and named it the city of David. David built the city all around from the Millo inward. ¹⁰And David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him.

Mark 6:1-13

^{6:1}He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. ²On 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! ³Is 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. ⁴Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honor, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.” ⁵And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. ⁶And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. ⁷He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. ⁸He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; ⁹but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. ¹⁰He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. ¹¹If 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.” ¹²So they went out and proclaimed that all

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

The shepherd boy was now King David. His rise to such a position came after Saul's collapse. Through Saul's chaotic rule, David was able to stay alive and demonstrate leadership that was needed to defeat the enemies of Israel. When you read through from 1 Samuel to this point it is like watching a soap opera that is full of intrigue, betrayal, murder, honor, valor, love, and assassination.

Saul is defeated by the Philistines and commits suicide. Three of his sons die as well. The remaining son, Ishbaal, was declared by Saul's general Abner to be the king over the twelve tribes of Israel. Ishbaal reigned for 2 years. The southern tribe of Judah seceded from the confederacy of the 12 tribes. This led to a civil war that was eventually won by David. Two men, Rechab and Baanah, decided to murder Ishbaal in his sleep. They thought this would please David. David was not pleased and had Rechab and Baanah killed and their bodies desecrated.

It is at this point we get "Then all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron..." No doubt the people of the tribes were a little nervous and also anxious. They could see that David was the man to lead them. They wanted to join together with Judah again. They claim that they are a part of David and Judah, "We are your bone and flesh." So a covenant is made and David was anointed King of Israel.

In a great political move, David decides to make the Jebusite City of Jerusalem the new capital. It is right on the border between Judah and the northern tribes. He renames it after himself, the City of David. This will be the place to bind each other as a covenantal family to one another. The city would be built from the Millo inward. This means there would be ramparts built first and then the houses and shops. Everyone in the City of David would be connected and protected. It is home.

Fast forward a little over a thousand years and we have a man from the House of David coming to his home. This is Jesus coming home. We don't know why he decided to come home. Maybe he wanted to connect with the bone and flesh of his family. His earlier homecoming didn't go well with his family. From chapter 3 of Mark's Gospel, Jesus went and it was time to eat. So many people were crowding around that he couldn't eat. His family came out with the strait jacket because people were saying that Jesus was out of his mind. Jesus continues to preach and his mother and brothers are still trying to get to him. Jesus then spells out that whoever does God's will is his mother and brother and sister.

So, Jesus is back. Perhaps he thought this time would go better. He goes to teach in the synagogue. The people listen. This man sounds like he is seminary educated. Is he not Mary's son? Notice they don't mention Joseph. Perhaps a way to slight Mary as they remember being told about Jesus' birth. Who is Jesus' Daddy? So, there is trouble in River City. Jesus can't do anything in his hometown except a couple of healings.

Most of us might feel put out if we go back to our hometown and find that we are not welcome. Perhaps Jesus feels that way. However, Jesus goes to his disciples. Are they ready to go out and do things for God's Kingdom?

When I was young, I loved playing baseball. I started at the age of 8. It was call Farm League. There was no T-ball back then. The baseball was pitched to you. I remember playing various positions.

When I turned 10 years old, I was able to enter Little League. I ended up playing shortstop more than anything. The pitches were also faster. My dad would tell not to try for a home run. Hit over the infielder's heads and get on base. By the time of last year in Little League I had .700 batting average.

At age 16 I entered the Senior League. At this level we could lead off the bases. The pitchers were even faster. Our team had the opening game for the upcoming season. I was put in right field. I was a little nervous. It was a cloudy day with the sun popping out every once in a while. It was the first pitch and I heard the crack of the bat. I watched it leave the infield and it was coming in my direction. My instincts kicked in and I was able to track the ball through the brightly lit clouds. I lifted my glove up and snagged that ball out of the air. All the years of playing baseball enabled me to make that catch.

Jesus was sure that his disciples were ready. They didn't have 8 years of experience but they were experienced enough to follow Jesus' directions. They responded to Jesus' first call to follow him. They spent time around the Galilee. Now it was time to expand and go into the countryside. It was time to help more people discover that their bone and flesh could be counted in God's Kingdom.

The instructions that Jesus gave were simple. Take only a staff. Depend upon God and the hospitality of the people you will meet.

I had the opportunity to participate in a pulpit exchange with a British Methodist pastor. The exchange was for five weeks. After that my family and I spent three weeks traveling through Western Europe. My wife, my two daughters, and myself were allowed only one suitcase for the entire 8 weeks. The suitcase had to fit in an overhead bin, be able to roll, and have straps that would permit carrying it like a backpack. There was concern about that size suitcase, but it worked.

Sometimes we take spiritual baggage with us when we don't need to. Maybe Jesus had this in mind as well for his disciples. They might be carrying spiritual baggage.

Did you know that churches can carry spiritual baggage? Very often, it's a big old steamer trunk labeled "tradition."

Tradition in the church is a mixed blessing. On the one hand, it's a marvelous source of stability and connectedness with the past. There's nothing like a classic hymn that has stood the test of time, or the immortal words of institution from the Lord's Supper. Yet, on the other hand, tradition can get in the way of adapting ourselves to the demands of mission to a rapidly changing world.

During the French and Indian War, some British officers traveled through America's north country, followed by wagon-loads of luxury items like fine china and wooden furniture. That was the way officers traveled along the paved roads of Europe -- but, along the Indian trails of upstate New York and Canada, this sort of baggage was ludicrous.

Traveling light on the journey of Christian discipleship sometimes requires us to leave certain beloved, but cumbersome, traditions behind.

Notice Jesus did not tell his disciples to take Torah scrolls and thump people over the head with them. He tells them to be a guest and share the news of God's loving forgiving ways.

We have the same invitation from Jesus. We are invited to get out and get going to meet people and share the Good News of God's love for everyone. There are challenges of course. It is not that easy. Jesus could only do a little ministry in his home town. Larry Broding shares this insight

“Such an effort requires patience, humility, and charity. We must listen, dialogue, and act as instruments for Christ, so the Spirit can act. We can only rely on the power of the Spirit, not political, economic, or social power to evangelize. (That, of course, does not mean we cannot work with these powers to project Christ's message.) But, we must remember the Spirit really evangelizes, not us. God works through us, not because of us.”

When I meet people, I usually ask where were they born and what has happened since. I listen for something that I can hook on to so I can develop a relationship.

Remember from John 14:12

“Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.”

Jesus trusts us to continue his presence in the world. Again, we are invited to get out and get into ministry with people.

Perhaps Karl Barth's most familiar line is, "To clasp the hands in prayer is the beginning of an uprising against the disorder of this world." Prayer is the source, the font, the heart, the root, the alpha point of our preparedness for social endeavor; but the Christian life of prayer does not stay on its knees; there is an uprising one gets and steps forward to meet the challenges, which can never be known in advance. The Christians' way forward into the future is more one of preparedness than one of planning.

Working together we can help people's "bone and flesh" be connected with our "bone and flesh," and thus be connected to Jesus' "bone and flesh," the body of Christ. Amen.