

Missionary Instructions Tenth Week in Ordinary Time St. Barnabas, apostle
Wednesday, June 11, 2014 Acts 11:12b-26; 13:1-3; **Mt 10:7-13** (Proclaim the nearness of God's kingdom. Don't draw attention to yourself.)

“If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; if not, let your peace return to you.”

Here Jesus is instructing his disciples in a very simple, straightforward way of what they are supposed to be doing in their mission. Now this is not the mission at the end of Jesus' life when he sends them forth. This is while **Jesus is still on earth, and they are helping him.** He sends them out two-by-two. You could say, it's a little experiment. How is this going to all work? Jesus does not present himself as the know-it-all, divine, omniscient, messenger-Messiah. **He presents himself as a servant who has a job to do and he wants others to help him.** And now we are going to see how it works.

First rule is **proclaim the nearness of God's kingdom.** What is the biggest problem people have? They think, if there is a God or there is such a thing as divine power or presence, it's far away. Jesus says, no—no, no, no—wrong. The presence of God, the kingdom of God, the power of God is at hand. It's at hand. It's in arms' reach. You have to believe this if anything is ever going to change for the better in your life, otherwise you are just going to put everything on hold. Why? I have other things to worry about. The whole point is **everything you have to worry about can be taken care of through the power and the mercy and the healing and the saving love of God.** So if you are going to try to take care of everything before that, before opening yourself to that, you are missing the whole point of life itself, actually.

You could say, using a modern metaphor, that **human life is like an airplane.** Now an airplane can for a short time go on automatic pilot, but **it can't always be on automatic pilot.** There has got to be a pilot in the cockpit looking at the flight plan, making decisions, checking instruments, otherwise the plane will be lost. Well, **so many people are lost because there is never anyone in the cockpit.** They are either in the restroom or they are back in the passenger part looking for the stewardess. But they are supposed to be flying the plane, the plane of their life. And **they have to know that there is a flight plan.** And they have to know that there is **a destination.** And **they have to be alert and aware and conscious and willing to help guide this plane on its way.** If they are not, it is going to

crash. The Fathers of the Church always talked about shipwreck, the crashing of the plane, the wrecking of the ship, the wrecking of life because no one is home; no one is in the cockpit.

The first message is the kingdom of God is at hand. It is right in front of you. It is very available. But you now have to respond.

Then he tells them, **describes to them** more or less, **what their work is. It's curing** because God does not will ill health, sickness, disease. **It's raising** because God does not will death, but rather life. **It's cleansing** because God does not desire leprosy and contagion and infection and impurity, but purity and health and cleanness. And then **it's driving out demons** because there's evil in the world, and how is it going to leave unless it's sent away. And that is what a disciple is supposed to do: drive out demons. They are all around. Anyone who doesn't believe in demons is clueless. **There's evil everywhere, and we need to send it away**, because it really doesn't belong here. It doesn't belong in God's creation. It's an unwanted guest. It's an alien force. It does not belong here. But it won't leave until it's sent away. Now it's precisely for that purpose that **Jesus sends his disciples with the authority to send it away**. Don't think about movies like *The Exorcist*. That's all Hollywood. **Every baptized Christian has the power to send evil on its way.**

Now that's true there are some cases where there is such infestation, so many roots in a person, special prayers are needed. The sacramental power of the priesthood is needed. That's very rare. In ninety-nine point nine percent of the cases evil will leave if it's sent away. But it's often welcomed. It's welcome. **That's what's wrong with our world: we citizens welcome evil. But not the disciple of Jesus Christ.**

The second part of this is—so the first part is about the message and the work—the second part is about **the apostle or the disciple himself. He is not supposed to draw attention to himself**. Don't draw attention to yourself. Don't be enviable. Don't have gold in your purse; don't even have a purse. Don't have a walking stick. That's too fancy. Don't have an extra pair of sandals or an extra tunic. You don't need it. **Whatever you need, your needs will be taken care of by the people you serve. That's their contribution** because everyone has to make a contribution in some way. This is a joint effort, collaborative effort—the kingdom of heaven, building it from the bottom-up. That was Jesus' plan. It still is. There is no plan B.