

Mark 6:1-13

Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. <sup>2</sup> When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?” <sup>3</sup> Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, <sup>[a]</sup> Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

<sup>4</sup> Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” <sup>5</sup> He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. <sup>6</sup> He was amazed at their lack of faith. Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. <sup>7</sup> Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

<sup>8</sup> These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. <sup>9</sup> Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. <sup>10</sup> Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. <sup>11</sup> And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

<sup>12</sup> They went out and preached that people should repent. <sup>13</sup> They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

## Have Faith in God

In this passage, the most remarkable thing — the one I keep coming back to — is that Jesus sent out his disciples to tell the good news and instructed them to ‘Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts.’ The disciples still didn’t know the full extent of who Jesus was, before they were being sent off to preach repentance and to cast out demons. They weren’t given a three year course in theology nor an exam — they were taught by being thrown in at the deep end.

And this has always reminded me of the story of Brother Andrew, told in his book ‘God’s Smuggler.’ Brother Andrew was a dutch missionary, famous for smuggling Bibles behind the iron curtain. In his book he moves quickly through his childhood and conversion, before speaking of his training as a missionary in London and Glasgow, before being sent out to do this smuggling, which forms the main part of his story.

I read this when I was a young teenager, and the picture of faith has remained with me. There is nothing I can teach today, or perhaps any day, half as important as what Brother Andrew can teach, so I’m going to read you an extract from God’s Smuggler — from his training in Glasgow.

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**The weeks passed** so fast that soon it came time for me to head out on the first of several training trips in evangelism. “You’re going to like this, Andy,” said Mr. Dinnen. “It’s an exercise in trust. The rules are simple. Each student on your team is given a one-pound banknote. With that you go on a missionary tour through Scotland. You’re expected to pay your own transportation, your own lodging, your food, any advertising you want to do, the renting of halls, providing refreshments—”

“All on a one-pound note?”

“Worse than that. When you get back to school after four weeks, you’re expected to pay back the pound!”

I laughed. “Sounds like we’ll be passing the hat all the time.”

“Oh, you’re not allowed to take up collections! Never. You’re not to mention money at your meetings. All of your needs have got to be provided without any manipulation on your part—or the experiment is a failure.”

I was a member of a team of five boys. Later when I tried to reconstruct where our funds came from during those four weeks, it was hard to. It seemed that what we needed was always just there. Sometimes a letter would arrive from one of the boys’ parents with a little money. Sometimes we would get a check in the mail from a church we had visited days or weeks earlier. The notes that came with these gifts were always interesting. “I know you don’t need money or you would have mentioned it,” someone would write. “But God just wouldn’t let me get to sleep tonight until I had put this in an envelope for you.”

Contributions frequently came in the form of produce. In one little town in the highlands of Scotland we were given six hundred eggs. We had eggs for breakfast, eggs for lunch, eggs as hors d’oeuvres before a dinner of eggs with an egg-white meringue dessert. It was weeks before we could look a chicken in the eye.

But money or produce, we stuck fast to two rules: we never mentioned a need aloud, and we gave away a tithe of whatever came to us as soon as we got it— within twenty-four hours if possible.

Another team that set out from school at the same time we did, was not so strict about tithing. They set aside their ten percent all right, but they didn’t give it away immediately, “in case we run into an emergency.” Of course they had emergencies! So did we, every day. But they ended their month owing money to hotels, lecture halls, and markets all over Scotland, while we came back to school almost ten pounds ahead. Fast as we could give money away, God was always swifter, and we ended with money to send to the WEC work overseas.

There were times before the end of the tour, however, when it looked as though the experiment was failing. One weekend we were holding meetings in Edinburgh. We had attracted a large group of young people the first day and were casting about for a way to get them to come back the next. Suddenly, without consulting anyone, one of the team members stood up and made an announcement.

“Before the meeting tomorrow evening,” he said, “we’d like you all to have tea with us here. Four o’clock. How many think they can make it?”

A couple dozen hands went up, and we were committed. At first, instead of being delighted, the rest of us were horrified. All of us knew that we had no tea, no cake, no bread and butter, and exactly five cups. Nor did we have money to buy these things: our last penny had gone to rent the hall. This was going to be a real test of God’s care.

And for a while it looked as though He was going to provide everything through the young people themselves. After the meeting several of them came forward and said they would like to help. One offered milk; another, half a pound of tea; another, sugar. One girl even offered to bring dishes. Our tea was rapidly taking shape. But there was one thing still missing—the cake. Without cake, these Scottish boys and girls wouldn’t consider tea tea.

So that night in our evening prayer time, we put the matter before God. “Lord, we’ve got ourselves into a spot. From somewhere we’ve got to get a cake. Will You help us?”

That night as we rolled up in our blankets on the floor of the hall, we played guessing games: How was God going to give us that cake? Among the five of us, we guessed everything imaginable—or so we thought.

Morning arrived. We half expected a heavenly messenger to come to our door bearing a cake. But no one came. The morning mail arrived. We ripped open the two letters, hoping for money. There was none. A woman from a nearby church came by to see if she could help. “Cake,” was on the tip of all our tongues, but we swallowed the word and shook our heads.

“Everything,” we assured her, “is in God’s hands.”

The tea had been announced for four o’clock in the afternoon. At three the tables were set, but still we had no cake. Three-thirty came. We put on water to boil. Three-forty-five.

And then the doorbell rang.

All of us together ran to the big front entrance, and there was the postman. In his hand was a large box.

“Hello, lads,” said the postman. “Got something for you that feels like a food package.” He handed the box to one of the boys. “The delivery day is over, actually,” he said, “but I hate to leave a perishable package overnight.”

We thanked him profusely, and the minute he closed the door the boy solemnly handed me the box. “It’s for you, Andrew. From a Mrs. William Hopkins in London.”

I took the package and carefully unwrapped it. Off came the twine. Off came the brown outside paper. Inside, there was no note—only a large white box. Deep in my soul I knew that I could afford the drama of lifting the lid slowly. As I did, there, in perfect condition, to be admired by five sets of wondering eyes, was an enormous, glistening, moist, chocolate cake.

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**Father God** — I think we all know that if we had faith even half as much as this, we might move any mountain you wanted shifting. Give us the faith to trust that if we do your work, you will faithfully provide. Amen.

SDG.