

An Opportune Assignment

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[0:00] Mark chapter 6, I was watching Eddie up there and I thought about years ago when I went to Winter Jam with the kids and they had a drummer in one of those bands that got on this extension while he was playing and they started spinning him up in the air like that Eddie we're going to work on getting you something like that so everyone should have received a card even those of you who snuck in if you would take that card and hold it in your hand for just a moment.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, you've placed people all around us that need Jesus. Some of them have never met the Lord, have never really had a personal acquaintance to invite them to come to Christ.

We pray for that person. Some of them know the Lord but they've been discouraged in their faith and they've not been faithful, Father.

Others may have known the Lord but walked away from him. Their life does not reflect anything of the Lord or maybe they were raised in church but never gave their life to Christ.

[1:27] God, you've placed these people all around us. Giving us the opportunity to invest in their lives and I pray, God, that in these next few moments that you will give us names.

As only your Holy Spirit can do, I ask your God that you'll lay them upon our hearts. And that you'll give us boldness enough to put them on a piece of paper.

Lead us, oh God, I pray, during these next few moments to hear from you and to respond to you in obedience. In Jesus' name, amen.

Amen. Easter's four weeks away. Whether you're ready or not, it's a great day to honor the Lord, celebrate the resurrection of the Lord and the new life that comes through him.

If you have other plans for Easter, you need to change them. You need to be here. If you've not made plans for Easter, don't overbook. Be here.

[2:35] It is a significant day. And God's blessed us with record attendance the last couple of years. And let's do it again. It's been a blessing.

It's a fun day. And in the past, we've made a commitment a few weeks out that I believe has worked.

Lives have been changed. As a matter of fact, somebody's in this room that whose name was written down on one of these cards, actually more than one of these cards, and placed at this cross a few years ago.

And some things began to develop in that man's life and around him. And through several interactions and several different circumstances, he came to worship here, he and his dear wife. And after they'd been here a while, I set up a time to talk to them. And they came by the office. And as long as God allows me to keep my right mind, or as right as it is, I'll never forget the comment that he made as he stood in the doorway of my study.

[3:50] He said, I need to get saved. Actually, he said, we need to get saved. His wife said, you need to get saved. I am saved. And he got saved that day. Baptized, been faithful in his church ever since.

I think it's because part of the reason is because some people invested in his life by praying for him. By caring enough to pray that he'd come to the Lord.

So I want us to commit today publicly and lay out the names before the Lord. The four by four card that you have is a prayer card.

It is a challenge to commit to pray for four people to invite to Easter Sunday at Pickens First Baptist Church.

It's two-sided in the sense that it's perforated in the middle. And the larger card, the more decorative card, is for you to keep. Because I want you to be reminded of James 5.16.

[4:54] The prayer of the righteous person is powerful and effective. That small card, we're going to tear off in a little while. I'm going to tell you what to do with it. But what I prayed for before we ever came into this room, what I've been praying all morning is that God would show you four people, four people that God would lay upon your heart to begin to pray for.

I'm not even asking you to do anything else at this point. I just want you to begin to pray about who God would have you to invite.

Four people. God's been wonderful to us. And Easter is a wonderful time to celebrate that. And it's a wonderful time to invite people to come.

It's an exciting day in the life of this church. And to see what God's doing. And people will come on Easter when they won't come any other time. I told you about that last week, you know. Christmas and Easter, that's two shots we got.

You know, we got to take advantage of the opportunity that we have. And we have something to share. If you have Christ in your life, you have something to share.

[6:14] And we have no idea how significant it could be just to pray and invite someone to come.

It's a wonderful opportunity for us. It's a wonderful opportunity for them. But not only is it an opportunity, but I want to be clear this morning. We've been assigned to do this. I didn't give the assignment.

I'm passing it on. We've been assigned to do this. Christ assigns us to do this. And I want you to see this. It's in Mark chapter 6, beginning in verse 7.

Now, some of you are keeping up. Not many of you. But some of you are keeping up. And some of you will say, look, we ain't covered 1 through 6, preacher, in Mark. We've been going through Mark. I'll get back to it.

Chill out. All right? Today, I want to focus on verses 7 through 13. And it says this. And he, speaking of Christ, called the 12 and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits.

[7:12] He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff, no bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and to not put on two tunics.

And he said to them, whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there. And if any place will not receive you and they will not listen to you, when you leave, shake off the dust that's on your feet as a testimony against them.

So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent. And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and healed them.

Now, I want to be clear that he asked of them, what he asked of them in this passage is more than what I'm asking of you. And he gives them abilities that we don't have.

However, like them, he is sending us out. And when we go and share Christ, I want us to remember six matters.

[8:23] Don't panic, they're quick matters. Six quick matters. One is this, we've been sent. We've been sent. If you're believing that this is just for his 12 disciples, I want you to be clear, that's not the case.

In Luke chapter 10, he sends out 72, two by two. In Acts chapter 1, 120 gather together. And when they go out and share the gospel, after Peter preaches to them, 3,000 are saved.

So, by the way, his last words of the Great Commission, Matthew 28, that tells us all to be about the task. It's an even clearer mandate to all of us.

We are all to go. And notice how we're to go. First, we start where we are. It's fun to go on mission trips and to serve in other places.

I just got back from Italy not long ago. And it was wonderful to be able to share my faith in that atmosphere. Sometimes you get more vigor in other places than you do at home, quite honestly.

[9:32] And you reach out to people that are new and many of them are so much different. You build bonds with those that you work alongside that you normally don't work alongside.

God moves in such events as that. And you have opportunities for that. There's a disaster relief training that's taking place at the end of this week. It's in the bulletin.

You can sign up for that and be certified, qualified to go and serve South Carolina disaster relief. All kinds of opportunities. I've shared Christ with folks.

Watch them come to the Lord by working in their yard after a storm. Wonderful things happen through that ministry. There's also an opportunity for Toronto on here that people are signing up for. And I'm thankful that that's taking off. And so I encourage you to be a part of that. It's not hard to do. I think they fly to Buffalo, drive across the line, go share the gospel, see Niagara, and come home. I mean, it's fun to do.

[10:28] And it's an opportunity to go. And so I encourage you to do that very thing. God moves in such as that. However, we got to do it at home too.

As a matter of fact, let's do it at home first. Let's get good at it. Do it at home first. It may not feel as cavalier, but it's actually more so.

You know why? Because you live with these people. God's entrusted the people that are around you. He's entrusted them to you. He's entrusted them to us.

So we need to share him with them to start where we are. And we need to be a valid witness. Let me explain.

Notice they went out two by two. They did that for a few reasons. One, they did it for safety. But primarily, they did it for encouragement.

[11:32] Ecclesiastes chapter 4 verse 9 says, two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. So it helps to go out with others and it's encouraging.

Builds a camaraderie among you as well. Jewish culture, however, said that in order for a witness to be valid, it needed two witnesses.

The primary reason is to have a valid witness. In Deuteronomy chapter 19 verse 15, it says, a single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he's committed.

Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall charge be established. It's not only an Old Testament concept, it's a New Testament concept. First Timothy chapter 5 verse 19 says, do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. Then even in worship, Matthew 18 verse 20 says, for where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them. God has a way of working when his people come together for causes. Just think about those that have been used of God.

[12:43] Peter and John, Peter and John, Barnabas and Saul, Paul and Silas, Barnabas and Mark later, Simon and Garfunkel, Brooks and Dunn.

They're two witnesses in Revelation 11 and I wish I had time to go into that and what that's all about, but it's the validity of the witness there. There's a variety of reasons why there were two, but one of them and the primary one was to be valid.

Now listen, if you're going to start where you are and be a valid witness, you have to have more than a partner to do it. You have to live out the Christian life.

You know what gives us validity in the world in which we live today? Living for Christ. I mean, I challenge you right now to, and I'm praying that you are, that you take that card and you write down four names of people that you want to pray for, that God's enabled you to pray for, to invite on Easter Sunday.

That's not rhetorical, it's literal. Write those four names down. And then this small little side is not for you to keep, so just write, repeat those names down on that side.

[14:10] And all I'm asking you to do today is to just commit to pray about inviting these four people.

Now I will tell you that in the coming weeks, if you go to them and invite them, and you're around them a lot and you've never spoke to them, it may not be pleasing.

It may not feel valid. It might be you want to speak to them first. It might be somebody's place, somebody on your heart that you see at the grocery store, when you go to the grocery store. This week you might want to speak to them. Just get to know them. Not to have a long conversation, just speak. There's a waiter or waitress that helps you a lot, and you've been around them before, but you've never actually said anything but give them the order. Speak. Maybe there's somebody you work with. God's beginning to impress them upon your heart, but you ain't even enough spoke to them.

[15:28] Might want to warm it just a little bit. Just begin to build an atmosphere of validity.

That you actually do care. I even challenge you to write down a name of somebody you don't want to share with. I mean, there's some people in the world you just don't want to interact with.

Okay. Maybe not you, but anyway. There's some people that you just don't want to. And, I mean, you know, you just not hungry for that. They're not going to be receptive. They're not going to be open to that.

They're not going to welcome that. I don't want to do it. Write that name down. All I'm asking you to do is to pray for them.

Pray that God will give you a desire and a boldness to invite them. I'm not even asking you to invite them yet. We'll enable you and help you along that process.

[16:35] I just ask you to pray for them. It's amazing what God can do through such as that. But it has to live out of our Christian life.

Be bona fide. Be real. If you're a Christian today, you've been sent out to share Christ.

I didn't do that. Pickens First Baptist didn't do that. Jesus did that. We have a responsibility. Not only that, but we have been spiritually empowered.

Verse 7 says he gave them authority over the unclean spirits. Matthew 10 verse 8 says more about it. And he says it was to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cleanse the lepers, to cast out demons. The truth is God empowered these disciples to do miracles to bring attention to their need of Christ. And I want to be clear about something.

[17:43] You probably don't have the same gifts that they do. But you do have the same Holy Spirit that they do. And he is our guide. And he is our power. And he works in more marvelous, miraculous ways than this.

And one of the most miraculous ways is when we pray for someone that we think will never entertain such special things. But we pray anyway.

And we ask God to work in their life. And then God opens the door. And we have the boldness. And we invite them. And surprisingly, he or she says, yes.

I'll come. And we go, what? Really? Really? Now, did that come because of our winsome, wonderful personality?

Listen, y'all have got wonderful, winsome personalities. Don't misunderstand me. But that's not why that happened. That's not why it happened. Not at all. I'll tell you how it happened.

[18:48] It's the power of God. It's the Spirit moving. When we were in Italy, the International Mission Board told us that they estimate, that it takes an average of 70 encounters with the gospel for one to come to Christ.

Seventy encounters. So, that means that they heard something on the radio at some point. That means somebody spoke to them about something.

That means maybe they listened to something as a child. Maybe they heard something at the water cooler. Different ways in different, and somewhere along the way, I don't know about you, but I want to get in on that.

I want to be a part of seeing people come to the Lord Jesus. Even if I'm not the one that closes the deal on that, I want to be a part of that process along the way.

Even if I'm not the one that actually prays with them, I want to be a part of that. And listen, folks, I want you to be a part of that. Because you want to watch your life take off for the Lord Jesus.

[19:58] Just share your faith with somebody. He'll do a work in your life, as well as doing a work in their life. And so, what happens is, when somebody who we've prayed for about inviting, that we know are going to say no, and we go to them anyway, and with gritted teeth and humbled

spirits, we say, you don't want to come to church, do you?

And we invite them, and they say, yes. Yes, I would like to do that. I want you to understand. Again, there's been five dozen other encounters along the way that's led to that opportunity for them to hear the gospel and respond.

We're just part of that process. And all I'm saying is, folks, we need to be a part of that process. We need to get in on that and watch how God works and moves in that.

We are spiritually empowered to see lives changed by our testimony. Sometimes, we'll never know this side of eternity, the difference that it makes.

But we have been empowered and challenged to do that very thing. Not only that, but we are to trust the Lord as we share.

[21:10] Just trust him. Verse 8 and 9 says, they took nothing with them, just the bare necessities. Why? Because God will provide. Trust the Lord. What are you worried about?

Trust him with what you're worried about. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, it's the clothes that we wear and the food that we eat that we so often burden us. And it should not even bother us. I promise you that if we let it, our worries will get in the way of us openly sharing Christ with folks. Our insecurities will come screaming out when we get concerned about what are they going to think if I say something to them about this.

What are they going to think? Listen. Understand something. The one that leads you to share is the same one that's working in their heart and life, and we can't even see it.

There's a divine assignment going on, folks. There's more happening here than what we see. And God's allowing us to be a part of that.

[22:25] So trust him with what he says. Trust him with your words. He'll tell you what to say. You might say, well, what do I say?

What if I ask a hard question? People are often afraid to share with a neighbor. They're afraid of a hard question. Listen, all we need to do is pray about inviting someone.

That's all I'm asking. Just pray. Lord, enable me and give me the opportunity and give me the boldness to just invite somebody.

Prayer works. It works in us. It works in them. God provides all we need, practical needs, spiritual needs. We just need to trust the Lord. Trust him.

And then we plant ourselves in to an opportunity. Verse 10 says, and he said to them, whenever you enter a house, stay there until you depart from there.

[23:28] In other words, keep your head focused on what you're doing. As Nike says, just do it. As God gives you the names of people, pray about those.

Trust God to do a work in them. And as he shows you what you are to do, and then invite them. Speak up. Give them an invitation. Offer to meet them at the door.

Tell them we got a good coffee bar that we can meet them at. Get them a cup of coffee. And bring them in. And tell them to get here early, thank God. Well, what are they going to say?

Well, if they say no, I don't want anything to do with that. Shake the dust off your feet. Take your shoe off right in front of them. No, I'm kidding. Don't do that. But shake the dust off your foot.

In other words, as the great theologian Elsa from Frozen said, let it go. Let it go. We cannot decide for them.

[24:35] And there's too many that want to hear the gospel for witnesses to become discouraged with the hard-headed that, in reality, if they don't change, they'll have eternity to pay for it.

We were handing out Olympic pins in Italy. We had these scarves on, and we were handing out these Olympic pins. People like the scarves, and so they ask about the scarves. We can't get the scarf. That's not available.

We do have a pin. Can I tell you a story about the pin? Yeah, you can tell me a story about the pin. So we was able to share possibly a gospel conversation, led them to a QR code that gave the gospel clearly if we didn't have a lot of time.

Sometimes we didn't have a lot of time. Most of the time we didn't have a lot of time. They just wanted to take it and all that stuff. But I remember shortly after I got there, somebody walked by, and I said, hey, would you like to have a pin like that?

And she said, no. Now, you need to understand, there was somebody behind me who was giving out roses, and then he wanted euros. There was somebody else handing out some kind of colored thread.

[25:35] I don't know what that was about. But anyway, tying that around people's wrists, and then he wanted some euros for that. There was somebody else who was taking pictures of people at the fountain and then somehow trying to gouge them. There was always something.

And here we are with these scarves on and all handing out stuff for free. And so they're wondering what the deal is. And this woman looks at me and says, no. I didn't want you to have it anyway. No, I didn't say that. I said, you sure it's free? No. There were 49 other people doing what I was doing.

Within a mile of where I was doing it. With the same scarf on and the same pins, we were there all week.

When we left, another load of 50 came and worked the same territory for another week. I have no idea what happened with the European lady who was visiting Italy for the Olympics that wanted nothing to do with the old ugly white dude that wanted to give her something.

[26:53] But because I didn't get negative with her. And because I tried to be as winsome as an ugly fellow can be.

It's very possible that somewhere down the way somebody else offered her a pin. And she thought, they're not chasing me down.

They're not going to pursue me. They're not meaning harm. They don't want anything from me. Maybe I'll take a pin.

You know, I can collect three of these. I have no idea what gospel conversations that lady has. And I pray today that someday when I go to glory, she'll come to me and go, thank you for the offer that I didn't take.

Because I'm telling you, God works in such as that. He does things like that. And so we have the opportunity to plant ourselves in what we're to do.

[27:58] And we may get results and we may not get results. But you're not getting anything unless you ask. Guys, if you want to go out on a date, I'm talking about single guys. If you want to go out on a date, you need to ask.

If you want a refill of your tea, you might want to tell the waitress if you need to. Don't be afraid to ask a question.

You can get squirmy along the way. That's okay. We all get a little squirmy. There is not a time I sit on that front pew when they get done with that song that I ain't squirmy before I come up here every time. But I still keep coming.

You have to give them an opportunity. We plant ourselves into an opportunity. And also, we don't take this personally. Verse 11 says this, A lot of people do not want to witness because they're afraid of being rejected.

And when people reject the gospel, I want you to hear me. They're not rejecting you. They're rejecting the gospel. I have spent my adult life binging and purging.

[29:17] And you can tell by looking at me. I go through seasons of binge. I go through seasons of purge. I go through seasons of purge. I got three wardrobes. and I was in a purge a few years ago and a sweet little girl rang my doorbell and I answered the door and she said I'm selling donuts for a good cause would you like to buy some donuts and I looked at that little girl and I said get me back get thee behind me Satan I will eat the box as well as the donuts no I didn't say that I said sweetie do I look like I need a donut not at all now I'll give you some money but I don't want your donuts now did I reject that little girl no I rejected those demonic Krispy Kreme glazed donuts and the reality is we are to give folks the opportunity we can't decide for them and there's too many that that need to hear the gospel for us to give up when they don't want to listen for us to not just move on but if you take it personally the devil will have won a victory instead move on let somebody else share with that person if that's the case and you never know the impact that you had when

you just said what you said you made a difference lastly we must go and do this verse 12 said so they went out and proclaim that people should repent

I'll tell you God blesses such as this we love to talk about what we love if we love the Lord let's talk about him let's invite folks to come to him pray for God pray for God to work in their lives pray for God to set up opportunities pray for God to give us the boldness to invite pray that God will bless our efforts I want you to hear me church their response is not our responsibility their opportunity is our responsibility and it's a divine assignment but it's an opportune one it's a great opportunity for them and for us now let me ask you before we deal with that has there ever been a time in your life when you've given your heart and life to the Lord Jesus Christ and ask him to forgive you of your sins to come into your life and save you because it all starts there if you've never given your heart and life to the Lord we stand and sing in just a moment

I want you to come and I want you to say pastor I need to be saved I want to give my life to Christ maybe you've done that privately but you've never acknowledged that publicly Jesus by his commission and by his example tell us that we do that through baptism and when we don't do that it's a hindrance to our walk it'll stand in the way of us being everything that we need to be for the Lord so we need to be faithful to follow that if you need to be baptized today you come we're actually planning to do it in a couple weeks so you come maybe you're here this morning and God's leading you to Pickens First Baptist Church this is the place that God would have you to serve as we stand and sing in just a moment I encourage you to come we'd love to guide you in that process or maybe it's another matter maybe it's something that is something in your life that's just eating your lunch or maybe there's something in somebody else's life that just has so burdened you and you need to give that to the Lord today you can do that at this altar you can do it with a pastor praying for you you can do it where you'll stand

I just encourage you to be obedient to follow the Lord to do what he'd have you to do to just say yes to Jesus and whatever he wants of you let's be obedient Heavenly Father Heavenly Father I love you and I thank you for the opportunity you give us to be in this place today I ask oh God that you'll lead us to be obedient Father to simply trust in you in Jesus precious name Amen Amen