

*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.*

I stand before you today a little tanner, a little more tired with a lot more deer fly and mosquito bites than usual. I spent a week at confirmation camp.

Usually I do not teach at confirmation camp. Camp counselors are assigned to each Bible Study group and most of the pastors feel it is time for the students to hear a voice different from the one they hear each Wednesday throughout the year. But Friday was different.

Thursday the flu bug stopped by for a visit - nearly forty people were bitten by the bug including the counselor who led our Bible Study. When it became clear at breakfast Friday that she would not be returning to duty that morning, I agreed to teach the two hour study.

The day's theme was Jesus words, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me.

I decided to try to help them see that we do not know God apart from Jesus. I devised a plan.

The group was divided into two, girls over here - boys over there.

List all the words that you can think of to describe God.

In five minutes both groups had long lists.

What I expected was that they would say a word and that Pastor Al Nelson and I would ask them to prove to us that the word fit God and that they would be silent.

But something very different from that happened instead.

The word was mighty. God is mighty both groups agreed. I asked, "From your own personal experience tell us why you think God is mighty."

Then one after another we heard them witness to the power of God in their lives. They told of prayers for healing, prayers for help, prayers for words to speak. One after another they spoke, many of them young people that you regularly see acolyting, sitting in the pew with you.

I had no idea that faith was so alive in them until they spoke. Each told of how God had helped, answered, cared.

My plan was ruined, but my day was made. I had wanted to talk about God in the world of ideas. But they answered about God in their life.

Then Jesus called the twelve and began to send them out two by two.

Just a short time before Jesus had first gathered these followers. As we read in Mark, the amount of instruction time was not long. We know that they were not finished products, before long they would be sleeping when Jesus asked them to stay awake, fleeing when he wanted them to follow. But early in his ministry Jesus trusted them to speak for him just as God trusted the young people from this church to speak for God last Friday.

Who hears about the faith that is in you? Do you share what God is doing in your life with the people who know you best? Can God enable you to speak about God with friends and family members? Are schools and offices and factories the places where God sends you as Jesus sent the twelve?

What might you speak?

The honest truth.

Each of you has stories to tell about fears and doubt and struggle, and God bringing you through. You have stories to tell about God granting you faith sufficient for the day. Many of you have stories to tell about struggling with Satan, and Christ holding on to you.

We must tell the stories, our stories. Because really they are not our stories at all but the continuing story of what God is doing in Jesus Christ. We hear the words, "I am the way and the truth and the life" and they are just words until Jesus is the way and the truth and the life for my life, for your life. They are just words until a friend says, "I know that is true and this is why."

When we tell the story of Christ working in us, then what our second lesson speaks of happens: We live to the praise of God's glory. For our lives are not about our being honored, our winning, our power, but our lives as Christians are about praising the glory of God.

Disciples were sent out to speak. You are called to be witnesses. I am called to preach. We will keep on speaking until the whole creation joins in the song of the praise of God.