**The Very Revd Dominic Barrington, Dean of York, reflects on Mark 6.1-13 for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity, 7th July.**

A reading from the Gospel according to Mark. ‘Jesus came to his hometown and his disciples followed him. On 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?

Is 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. Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown and among their own kin, and in their own house.” And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them.

And he was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went out among the villages teaching. He called the 12 and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff. No bread, no bag, no money in their belts, but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics.

He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If 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.” So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.’

When we hear this slightly puzzling section of the gospel, puzzling because Jesus suddenly seems not fully capable of performing miracles, which isn't what we have come to expect, when we hear this passage from Mark 6, we should hear it with Mark 3 echoing in our minds. If you recall, that is at an early point in Jesus’s ministry, and he's there with his new-found followers, and he's told that his mum and his brothers and his sisters are waiting outside, and he dismisses them by saying, “Who are my mother and brothers and sisters?

You guys, sitting, listening to me. You guys that keep the word of God. You are my mother, brothers, and sisters.” Jesus is, very clearly in Mark, forming a community; a new community, a gospel-focused community that doesn't function in the way in which the communities that we are used to function, most particularly the domestic family. Jesus has been perhaps rather offhand in Mark 3 with his mother, brothers and sisters, and it's interesting that this gets rather thrown back at him because the crowds in his hometown just say, “Oh, he's the kid from next door.

He can't be anything special.” Somehow, they are not in the new community of the gospel. They are choosing not to be in that community. And we see the community expand in terms of mission, because on the back of this, Jesus starts sending them out in pairs, and they go out with the risk that they may be rejected, but manifestly, many of them are not.

And we are told that they cast out many demons and anointed with oil many who are sick and cured them. The community of the gospel, the community of mission and ministry is growing as we watch. It is not a community of the kind that some have been led to expect, but it's Jesus’s new and vibrant community of the good news.

The question for us is what kind of community we hope and expect and want the church to be, and what kind of community calls us and will enable us to play our part. Let's hope and pray as we hear this gospel read again on Sunday that we are ready to serve and follow Jesus as part of the gospel-centred community that he calls into being.

Let us pray. Loving God, you call us into a community of mission that we might serve the world for which Jesus died. Keep us focused on that community and its mission as the thing foremost in our hearts. We ask this in his name. We pray we will always follow him. Amen.