

# JESUS CALLS THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Mark 3:7-19

Key Verses: 3:13-14

*“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.”*

In today’s passage Jesus calls the twelve apostles. The Pharisees were supposed to be spiritual leaders for God’s people, but they were useless to God because they were proud and self-righteous. They were indifferent to the suffering people. The people wandered around like sheep without a shepherd. But Jesus was not discouraged. He called the Twelve to train them as his disciples so that they could take care of God’s sheep.

## I. MANY PEOPLE COME JESUS (7-12)

When the Pharisees saw how Jesus healed the man with a shriveled hand, they did not praise God as other people did. Instead, they went to the Herodians to make a plot to kill Jesus (6). They did not repent their lack of compassion for people like the man with a shriveled hand. Neither they repented their legalistic mind. They criticized Jesus’ disciples for picking some heads of grain on Sabbath. But now they plotted murder on Sabbath. They did not know the heart of God. They did not love God.

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake (7). But people who heard that Jesus had healed the man with a shriveled hand came to him from all over the region of Galilee. Many people came also from Jerusalem in Judea and from Idumea, a region located between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. More people came from the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon located in Phoenicia, today’s Lebanon (8-9). These people were all either sick or demon possessed (10-11). They desperately wanted Jesus’ healing touch. They frantically tried to get near Jesus and touch him. Jesus was almost pushed into the lake. So he asked for a boat to be kept ready for him (9). Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God” even though the Pharisees did not recognize him (11). This scene describes the desperate situation of people without a shepherd. More importantly, this scene shows a wonderful profile of Jesus’ shepherd life.

## II. JESUS CALLS THE TWELVE DISCIPLES (13-19)

What did Jesus do when he saw the needy people who were like sheep without a shepherd? He did not despair. Instead, Jesus went up into the hills to pray (13; Lk 6:12). He probably spent all night in prayer. He prayed to God and sought ways to fulfill God’s will for world salvation. Then God gave him a clear direction for his ministry. What did Jesus decide to do?

**First, Jesus called the twelve apostles** (13-14, 16-19). Look at verse 13. *Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.* Jesus called his disciples and they came to him. There were so many people who needed his personal attention. But the religious leaders were no help. They were actually blocking his messianic ministry, as evidenced in the healing of the man with a shriveled hand. Jesus also knew that his time on earth was limited. Soon he would die on the cross as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. But people everywhere really needed shepherds who could take care of them. So he called his disciples so that they could continue his work.

Jesus called “those he wanted.” The disciples were not like the religious leaders. They were not self-righteous. They were not legalistic. They were ordinary people with potential to be spiritual leaders for God’s lost sheep. At this point, they were far from being spiritual let alone being leaders. Still, Jesus wanted them to be his disciples. He wanted them to be trained as spiritual leaders. So he called them and they came to him. It was not they who chose to follow Jesus. Jesus chose them and appointed them to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last (Jn 15:16).

Look at verse 14a. *“He appointed twelve--designating them apostles...”* There were thousands of people following him. But Jesus chose only 12. What kind of people did he call? Look at verses 16-19. *“These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.”* Simon is first on the list. “Simon” means “sand.” He was a very emotional and unstable person. Jesus gave him the name “Peter,” which means “rock.” Jesus had the hope of raising him to be the foundation of the church of God. The brothers James and John appeared to be quiet. But inwardly they were fierce competitors. They were very ambitious. Jesus gave them the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder, so they might become thunderous and courageous men of faith instead of pursuing their selfish ambitions. Andrew was a simple-minded person. He was a man of possibility. Philip was mathematically oriented. But he learned that Jesus’ math was different from his. Bartholomew was also known as Nathanael. He was a man of honesty. He spent much time under a fig tree meditating on the word of God. Matthew was formerly known as Levi, the selfish tax collector. Thomas was a man of doubt. He was reluctant to believe in anything unless there was empirical evidence for it. Jesus told him that those who believe without seeing first are blessed (Jn 20:29). Thaddaeus was also known as “the good Judas.” Simon the Zealot was a member of the resistance movement against the Roman Empire. And there was Judas Iscariot, who never gave up his desires for money and finally betrayed Jesus.

From a businessman’s point of view, the Twelve looked like a bunch of losers. They did not have impressive credentials. None of them had higher education like the Pharisees did. But from a spiritual point of view, they were good candidates for disciples because they responded to his calling (13) and because they had learning minds. When Jesus called them, they came to him. They did not ignore his calling. When Jesus said to Levi, “Follow me,” he made a decisive decision to leave his lucrative job and follow

Jesus. There were other people Jesus called. But not all of them follow him. For example, Jesus called a rich young man to follow him. Sadly, the man said “No, thanks” to Jesus because he cared more about his wealth than Jesus.

In human eyes, the twelve disciples looked like a dirty dozen. However, we can see that each of them had a unique character. They represented various kinds of people. As a saying goes, “Only a widow knows a widow’s situation.” Peter could understand well emotional people. James and John could relate to ambitious people. Matthew had a shepherd’s heart toward selfish people. Indeed, Jesus called all types of people to be his disciples so that they could be shepherds for all kinds of people.

**Second, Jesus called them to be with him** (14). Look at verse 14b. “... *that they might be with him ...*” What does it mean to be with Jesus? It means to spend time with him. Indeed, Jesus spent time with his disciples. He took them everywhere with him. They were there when he healed sick people and drove out demons. There were there when he taught the word of God. By being with them, Jesus helped them until they were changed into spiritual men, and until they came to know God personally. Jesus was with them until holy desires arose in their hearts to be shepherds of God’s flock.

What does the word “disciple” mean? It means a learner. The word “disciple” has root in the word “discipline.” Without discipline, no one can be a disciple of Jesus. These days, people don’t like this word, discipline. In this rebellious generation, it is hard for anyone to learn from others. Especially, it is hard for anyone to learn Jesus’ gentleness and humbleness. The Pharisees had the appearance of piety, but they had no inner humility to learn from the Son of God. They were political and proud. The disciples were very ordinary people. They possessed no special talents. So it seemed more logical for Jesus to choose some of the religious leaders to be his disciples. But Jesus chose the disciples because they had great learning minds. A humble, learning mind is more important than any other qualification for a disciple. Because of their learning minds they could learn of Jesus. And after Jesus’ death and resurrection, they could continue the work of Jesus on earth. We learn here that to be Jesus’ disciples, we must have a great learning mind like his disciples did. We must discipline ourselves to be with Jesus by studying the word of God sincerely and obey what he says. We should be with Jesus through our prayer life. May God help us to spend more time with Jesus so that we may grow as his committed disciples!

**Third, Jesus called them to preach the word.** Look at verses 14b. “... *and that he might send them out to preach...*” Jesus trained them so that he could send them out to teach the word. People of this world need the word of God more than anything else. They need the word of God more urgently than things like money, power or good career. It is because only the word of God can save the sinful mankind from eternal condemnation. Jesus says in John 5:24: “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” That’s why Jesus devoted his public life to preaching the word of God. And that is why Jesus wanted his disciples to preach the word of God. In John 21, Jesus told his top disciple Peter, “Simon, do you truly love me? If so, feed my sheep!”

**Fourth, Jesus called them to have spiritual authority** (15). Look at verse 15. “... *and to have authority to drive out demons.*” Jesus wanted to train his disciples to have authority over evil spirits. Demons are the agents of Satan. Satan tempts us to do things that are evil before God. Many of problems of the mankind are originated from Satan. Satan plants doubts and fears in our hearts. So we need spiritual leaders who can discern the crafty ploys of Satan and lead God’s sheep to the right paths. Jesus called his disciples to have spiritual discernment and spiritual authority over Satan’s work so that they may be good shepherds for his people.

To summarize, the purpose of his discipleship ministry was to raise each person to be a shepherd. When Jesus chose the twelve, he had the same faith as that of God, who chose one man Abraham as a blessing for all people (Ge 12:1-3). Jesus believed that these ordinary guys could be changed into fathers of faith. How important was the discipleship training in Jesus’ ministry? Just before his crucifixion, Jesus prayed. His prayer is recorded in John 17 and is called “Jesus’ high priestly prayer.” One of the main points of his prayer was about his disciples. In fact, his prayer reads like his mission report to God about how he raised his disciples. He said, “I have brought you glory by completing the work you gave me to do” (4). This work was not only the work of dying on the cross for the sins of the world but also the work of raising his disciples. It was now their turn to bring to all people the good news that God loves the world. Thus, raising disciples was an essential part of his work. In his prayer, he also talked about how he raised his disciples. There were two major things Jesus did for them. He taught them the word of God and helped them to obey the word. He also prayed for them. Finally, he gave them the supreme command in Matthew 28:19: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ...” May God help us to follow the footsteps of Jesus!

Today’s passage teaches us that Jesus did not despair when he saw the dark world and the suffering of so many people. He called twelve disciples and raised them as future leaders of the world. We learn that we should not despair in any situation, but raise disciples of Jesus until we see Jesus face to face in heaven and hear him say to us, “Well done, my good and faithful servants!” I earnestly pray that each of us may be a good disciple of Jesus by being with him and by preaching the word of God. I also pray that we may be faithful disciple makers.

Let us read our key verses (13-14): “*Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send him out to preach.*”