

The Calling of the Twelve (Part 1)

Mark 3:13-15

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Introduction

We often think of the Apostles as men who are super holy and of the highest level of spirituality. When Jesus appointed them, those titles certainly do not fit them! In fact, nothing could be further from the truth as to who the Apostles are. They are ordinary men. They are from different walks of life: some are blue collar workers and other white collar workers. There are even those who practice politics (Simon the Zealot). Most of them are from Galilean area (known to the people in Jerusalem as country bumpkins). Four apostles are fishermen by trade, and another is a former tax-collector (which most Jews hate with fervent passion). It is interesting to note that Jesus chooses not one scribe, lawyer, priest, or any of the highly educated elite men in Israel to be His disciple. He chooses 12 ordinary men so that the world be turned upside down! This is especially encouraging for us because God does the same with us!

1 Corinthians 1:26-28 *For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.*

Today I want to focus on how Jesus calls the Twelve and how He transforms them as men who tilt the world upside down.

Mark 2:13-15 *Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to Him those He wanted, and they came to Him. ¹⁴He appointed twelve-designating them apostles-that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach ¹⁵and to have authority to drive out demons.*

Before we look at the calling of the Twelve—we must keep in mind what has happened to the disciples prior to the calling.

1. Jesus meets with Andrew, John, Peter, James, Philip and Nathaniel in Cana. This is the first encounter Jesus has with them. This happens right after Jesus' baptism. (**John 1:34-51**). After this meeting, they go back to their former jobs.
2. After several months, He calls them to follow Him to ministry. (**Mark 1:16-20**—the fishermen; **2:13-14**—Matthew leaves his job to follow Jesus)
3. After some time, Jesus then narrows the large group of followers to the Twelve, so He can train them and send them out into the world.

It is important to note that Jesus does not call these men to follow Him because of their inward worthiness or their outstanding personal capabilities. He chooses them on the basis of what He can make of them by His own power working through them (*MacArthur, John. Gospel according to Matthew Chapter 8-15; pg 121*).

I. The Calling of the Twelve

- Disciples to apostles
 - Disciples = learners
 - Apostles = sent ones...to do what the master wants
- Sovereign call
 - Jesus' choice--- *called to Him those He wanted*

John 15:16 *You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit-fruit that will last.*

- His call
 - After praying all night

Luke 6:12-13 *One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³When morning came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also designated apostles.*

- Why Twelve?
 - Judgment against Israel
 - Judgment against the failure of the established religious order
 - Judgment against the leaders
 - 12 apostles = twelve tribes of Israel
 - New Covenant

Note: This was in response to the Pharisees' plot to kill Jesus (**Mark 3:6**)

- Appointed
 - Making—Jesus is making the Twelve
 - He is forging them—training them
 - They go everywhere with Him
 - They are learning directly from His mouth and His actions
 - Before He sends them, He
 - Teaches them
 - **Luke 6:12-16**—the choosing of the Twelve
 - **Luke 6:20-49**—Sermon on the Mount
 - **Luke 7**—Jesus travelled all over Galilee and healing people (and raising people from the dead)
 - **Luke 8**—Parable of the sower
 - After this period of training, Jesus then sends them
- Sends them
 - To preach
 - To drive out demons

Luke 9:1-6 *When Jesus had called the Twelve together, He gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ²and He sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³He told them: "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. ⁴Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. ⁵If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." ⁶So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere.*

Luke 9:10 *When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then He took them with Him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida.*

Note: They are doing exactly what Jesus is doing!

Transition: What specific areas is Jesus training them? What problems do the men have that could be problematic? What does Jesus do to remedy that?

II. The Forging of the Twelve

Note: In order that they be ready, Jesus had to refine them in His images. There are four problems that the disciples have during their training, and He is able to refine them into His image (all except Judas). It is encouraging because we have the same problems as the Twelve, yet He is patient enough to work with them—as He does with us!

- No spiritual understanding

Matthew 15:15-16 Peter said, "Explain the parable to us." ¹⁶"Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them.

Mark 9:32 But they did not understand what He meant and were afraid to ask Him about it. (This is after Jesus had finished telling them about His upcoming death...same as what Luke says.)

Luke 18:31-34 Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. ³²He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock Him, insult Him, spit on Him, flog Him and kill Him. ³³On the third day He will rise again." ³⁴The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what He was talking about.

- Jesus' remedy
 - He continued to patiently teach and teach again, then teach some more!

Acts 1:3 After His suffering, he showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

- No humility

Luke 9:46 An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest.

Mark 9:33-34 They came to Capernaum. When He was in the house, He asked them, "What were you arguing about on the road?" ³⁴But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

Matthew 20:20-24 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of Him. ²¹"What is it you want?" He asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in Your kingdom." ²²"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. ²³Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from My cup, but to sit at My right or left is not for Me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by My Father." ²⁴When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers.

Note: Why were they mad? They are mad at the request the brothers made of Jesus—they being the greatest, having superiority over them.

- Jesus' remedy
 - Demonstration of humility

Luke 9:47-48 Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside Him. ⁴⁸Then He said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in My name welcomes Me; and whoever welcomes Me welcomes the One who sent Me. For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest."

John 13:5-15: Jesus washes the disciples' feet to teach them about humility

- No faith

Matthew 8:25-26 *The disciples went and woke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!"²⁶ He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.*

- Jesus' remedy
 - He performed mighty deeds so that they are convinced of who He is

John 20:30 *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book.*

- No commitment

Luke 22:33-34 *But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with You to prison and to death."³⁴ Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know Me."*

- Jesus' remedy
 - Intercessory prayer

Luke 22:31-32 *Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat.³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.*

Conclusion

Twelve ordinary men transformed by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ to do His work. He did so with them, and He does so with us!

In them He saw hidden weakness and incipient strength. There was an abundance of chaff with the scanty grains of wheat which would need much winnowing, but He was equal to the task. The germs of promise were there and in time would yield the perfect fruit. He believed in the men He had chosen and what was more, He had absolute confidence in His own power to make them what He wanted them to be. (Lockyer, Herbert. All the Apostles in the Bible. pg 34)

There is no better compliment than those of the Pharisees who arrested Peter and John for preaching the gospel:

Acts 4:13 *When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*

How they have fulfilled the words of Jesus!

Luke 6:40 *A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.*

What our Lord did with the Twelve, He does the same with us!