

## Twelve Ordinary Men – Mark 3:13-19

### *Introduction, Outline*

- Scripture reading: Mark 3:13-19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
- Teaching Text: Mark 3:13-19 (NASB1995)

**13** And He \*went up on the mountain and \*summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. **14** And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He *could* send them out to preach, **15** and to have authority to cast out the demons. **16** And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), **17** and James, the *son* of Zebedee, and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, “Sons of Thunder”); **18** and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot; **19** and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.

- Perhaps the most encouraging story in the Bible is how God chose the twelve apostles, shaped them, and used them as a vital, indispensable part of God's glorious work, to be remembered forever by all generations.
- Five stages of Jesus calling the twelve apostles: 1. Calling to be saved (John 1:35-51); 2. Full-time ministry (Mark 1:16-20); 3. Apostolic appointment (Mark 3:13-19) ; 4. Sending on short-term missions for training (Mark 6:7-13); 5. Official commissioning after ascension (Matthew 28:18-20).
- Outline:
  - Title: **Twelve Ordinary Men**
  - 1. The Calling of the Twelve (v13)
  - 2. The Charge to the Twelve (vv 14-15)
  - 3. The Characters of the Twelve (vv 16-19)

### **The Calling of the Twelve (v13)**

- “He went up on the mountain”: The purpose was to pray through the night (Luke 6:12). Of course, this was not the daily habit of Jesus, but he had a particularly heavy burden on his heart, so he had to pray with special urgency. What was His burden?

Perhaps he already knew that the next day he would choose the twelve to be apostles so he spent the whole night praying for each one of them. They all have their own personalities and weaknesses, and they have much need to grow.

Perhaps, he did not know that he would choose the apostles the next day. Perhaps he just felt the escalating pressure of hostility, indicating the cross is approaching; at the same time, the crowd following him is getting larger and larger, so he realizes that he needs to plan his ministry more strategically in the limited time left. Perhaps it was such a burden that made him pray all night, seeking the will of the Father. Perhaps it was through this prayer that the Father revealed to him the identities of the twelve apostles one by one.

- “summoned those whom He Himself wanted”: After dawn, Jesus called all the disciples, not just the twelve (Luke 6:13), so it was probably a public ceremony witnessed by the whole group. Mark emphasizes "Himself wanted", highlighting Jesus' sovereignty as God in choosing them.

**John 15:16** “You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain.....”

By worldly standards, none of the twelve apostles should have been elected. None of them has any academic achievements or social status or any kind of title of dignity. Their most extraordinary feature is that they are so ordinary, so ordinary that we can't figure out why they end up being so important. A few fishermen, a tax collector, a Zealot..... Whether you judge by religious attainment, education level, or social status, they have no reason to stand out and become apostles to carry out the mission of the kingdom of God.

**1 Corinthians 1: 18-31**: “For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.’ ...For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble... so that no man may boast before God.”

But these twelve obviously often forget their humble origins. They fought again and again over who gets to be the greatest. They are still far from being humble. The Lord Jesus has to train them patiently so that they can be used by God.

### **The Charge to the Twelve (vv 14-15)**

- “And He appointed twelve”: Twelve is the number of the tribes of Israel, representing all God's people. Jesus is installing new leaders for His people because they are being led by a group of totally unqualified leaders (cf. Matt. 23:13-36). The election of the twelve apostles contains a message of judgment that the twelve tribes had completely turned away from God's will (Luke 22:30).
- “they would be with Him”: This is the first mission of the apostles. Not just to learn from Him, but to be with Him, emphasizing an intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus. This is the foundation of all ministries.

【Application】 Relationship is also an important principle of our spiritual leadership. Jesus led His disciples through relationships, and we do the same in spiritual leadership. Husbands, parents, ministry leaders, do you long for an intimate relationship with those you lead? Or do you just want them to do what you want them to do?

【Application】 Your intimacy with the Lord will be seen by others! Peter's preaching showed amazing wisdom and power, so that people "observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and **began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.**" Can people around you recognize that you have been with Jesus?

- “send them out to preach”: The second mission of the apostles. "Send" is the verb form of "apostle", and the sending of Jesus defines the identity of the apostle. Being with the Lord is only a preparation process, what defines an apostle is being sent to preach for the Lord.

【Note】 The difference between disciple and apostle. A disciple literally means a learner, a follower (that is, all Christians); an apostle is a sent one who carries the authority of the sender, represents the sender himself, and performs the tasks of the sender. The apostles are the representatives of Jesus himself, preaching the message of Jesus directly with the authority of Jesus. This is an unparalleled role! When they were exercising their duty as apostles, the message they preached was the message of Jesus, with the authority of Jesus, absolutely true and without error.

【Application】 This is one of the reasons why Christians love the Bible so much, because here is the message directly preached by the apostles, which can never be replaced by anyone's teaching today!

- “to have authority to cast out the demons”: The third mission of the apostles. The purpose of casting out demons is to prove they have the authority of Jesus, thus proving their message is Jesus' message. Casting out demons is subservient to preaching the message. Thus, miracles are “signs of a true apostle” (2 Cor. 12:12; cf. Heb. 2:3). This is why no one today has the gift of miracles.

【Extension】 Although today's preachers do not have miracles, they must not be without the testimony of the power of the Holy Spirit. What is this testimony? It is a life of progressive sanctification and the testimony of using gifts to serve the church (see 1 Timothy 4:15-16).

## The Characters of the Twelve (vv 16-19)

- “the twelve”: There are four lists of the names of apostles in the New Testament (cf. Matt. 10:2-4; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13), and the orders are not identical. But if you divide the twelve into three groups of four, you will find it's always the same four people in each group, and the only difference is the order within the group. The three groups of apostles appear in decreasing

frequency in the Bible, implying different degrees of closeness to Jesus. The first person in each group is always the same, implying that he is the leader of the group.

**【Insights】** Jesus' spiritual leadership strategy: not to distribute time and energy equally, but to have priorities. He focuses on a few key disciples and there's even a focus among them. There're leaders in each group, though without an official title. Leaders will be leaders. They just naturally lead. The same is true in the church.

- "Peter": the leader of leaders. Jesus named him Peter which means "rock". Rocks are stable and reliable. Peter was by nature anything but stable and reliable. To be a leaders' leader, he must learn to be so. Jesus transformed him through training.
- "James", "John": Jesus gave the nickname "Boanerges", which means, "Sons of Thunder". They have a short temper (see Luke 9:54). It is good to be zealous for the Lord, but zeal combined with a short temper often backfires. God is not just righteous and holy, but also gentle and patient. The temperament of these two needs to be more shaped by God's tenderness and patience.
- "Andrew": Every time he appears in the Gospels, he's always bringing people to Jesus. Andrew sees the value of individuals. What he sees is not the group, but the individuals.
- "Philip": His faith often fails to see beyond the superficial reality (cf. John 6:5-7; 14:8-9).
- "Bartholomew": Also named Nathanael, simple and straightforward guy, without deceit in his heart (cf. John 1:45-49).
- "Matthew": A tax collector, a heinous sinner in the eyes of the world (see Mark 2:13-17).
- "Thomas": Often called "doubting Thomas", people tend to see him as a typical example of doubting and little faith. In fact, he had a deep love for Jesus, just a bit pessimistic, always thinking the worst (cf. John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24-28).
- The last four: We know almost nothing about them except the scandal of Judas. The only thing we know is that Simon is a Zealot. Zealots are radical religious extremists who often carry daggers to assassinate their targets. Among their targets are the tax collectors whom they hate for being defectors to Rome. That Simon's name appears here together with Matthew the tax collector is a testimony to the power of the gospel. In the end, they all became the foundation of the church. Without them, there would've been no church nor our salvation today.

***Conclusion:***

God can use the most ordinary people to accomplish the most extraordinary things.