

The Calling of the Twelve

Mark 3: 13-21

Surely you would agree that our study thus far has revealed a very busy, and often difficult time for Jesus. His ministry had gained momentum and immense popularity among the common people. Everywhere Jesus went, He was met with large crowds of people, all desiring to receive something from Him. He is now continually met with opposition from the scribes and Pharisees. The busyness and opposition will continue, but Jesus remains faithful to the work the Father had given Him to carry out.

Our text today reveals a glimpse into one of the few occasions where our Lord pulled aside with the disciples for a time of fellowship and instruction. We will discuss the occasion when our Lord ordained the twelve to carry on the work of ministry following His death, resurrection, and ascension.

While many followed Jesus, these men were chosen and set apart for the work of ministry. This account should bring hope to every believer. These men were all different. They came from different backgrounds, with different personalities, and yet they were all chosen to serve the Lord in a unique and special way. For the most part, these men were average, ordinary men. In fact, their résumés would not have landed lucrative or influential positions among society. I am thankful the Lord doesn't call the equipped or those with abilities; He equips the called, and seeks availability.

Let's take a few moments to consider the [realities](#) within the text as we discuss: [The Calling of the Twelve](#).

I. The Persuasion in the Call (13) – [And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.](#) We need to consider:

A. Jesus' Sovereignty (13a) – [And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would.](#) Jesus went into the mountain, and called those He had chosen to follow Him. We have considered the call of several already to follow Him. These men were busy living life, and the Lord extended the call to come and follow Him. We have no record of any of these men seeking this position for themselves. In His sovereign wisdom, Jesus selected them to follow Him. Such is the case here as well. These men were chosen and called of the Lord. Luke reveals that our Lord spent the night in prayer with the Father before ordaining these men, [Luke 6:12](#). One cannot ignore the sovereignty involved in the calling of the twelve.

- Our Lord continues to call whom He will into various aspects of ministry. He chooses based on His divine wisdom, not the desires or dictates of men. Our Lord sees what men fail to see. Often He chooses those whom the world rejects. He chooses those who lack ability, and equips them to carry out His purpose. I am thankful the Lord allowed me to have a small part in the Kingdom work. When most would have overlooked me, Jesus offered a place of service.

B. Their Submission (13b) – [and they came unto him](#). When Jesus called, the twelve obediently responded to His call. They willingly submitted their lives to the Lord. That is not to say they understood the enormity of it all, but they submitted to the Lord. They were not spiritually mature at this moment, or ready to lead multitudes, but they agreed to follow the Lord and submit to His will for their lives. This was just the beginning of a wonderful journey for them.

- If the Lord is dealing with you about a specific area of service, I would encourage you to respond obediently to His call. He makes no mistakes. Your arguments and concerns are unnecessary and not beneficial. He knows you better than you know yourself. He knows your weaknesses and limitations, but He also knows what you are capable of through His leading. If He is calling, you will never find peace apart from obedience to His desire for your life.

II. The Purpose of the Call (14-15) – Mark revealed the purpose of this call for the twelve, the Lord's desire for their lives. The call involved:

A. Instruction (14a) – [And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him](#). Jesus knew He would not be with these men for an extended period of time. He would give His life on the cross for our sin and ascend back to the Father. There was much to learn in a short amount of time. Jesus needed these men with Him, in order to instruct and prepare them for the work ahead. (It is imperative that we spend time with the Lord, in close fellowship with Him, to receive the wisdom and instruction we need to be effective in the work He has given us.)

B. Proclamation (14) – [And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach](#). These men were called and entrusted with an essential responsibility – preaching the Gospel to those who had yet to believe in Christ for salvation. This would be their primary responsibility. They were called to proclaim the Good News of the Gospel. (All are not called to preach or pastor, but every believer is called to proclaim the Gospel. That is our responsibility in serving Christ – sharing our faith and the saving grace of Christ the Lord.)

C. Confirmation (15) – [And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils](#). These men received special power as they ministered. The Lord enabled them to heal infirmities and cast out devils. This was not done to elevate these men in the eyes of others, but to confirm the power of Christ and convince unbelievers of the Gospel. Their lives were to bear witness to the power and grace of Christ the Lord.

▪ Some continue to claim such power, but such giftedness ceased with the apostle Paul. When you study the Acts and Epistles, it becomes clear that the gifts of healing and power over evil spirits ceased. However, the principle remains today. We too are expected to live our lives in a way that brings glory to the Lord and reveals His power in our lives. We must live in such a way that others would desire what we have in Christ!

III. The People in the Call (16-19) – Mark recorded the names of the twelve called of Jesus. Let's consider what we know about these men.

- **Simon** — Jesus changed his name to “*Peter*”. Peter was the leader of the group. He was a fisherman with a family. He was outspoken and opinionated. He failed the Lord in a very public manner, but he humbled himself and was restored. He was used of the Lord in a mighty way in the early church.
- **James** — He was a fisherman. He was a member of the Lord's inner circle. James, Peter and John were singled out for a special time of ministry three times: when the daughter of Jairus was raised from the dead; when Jesus was transfigured; and when Jesus went a little farther into Gethsemane to pray. James was a great leader in the early church, serving as its first Pastor. He was the first of the Apostles to be put to death for his faith in the Lord.
- **John** — He was the brother of James, also a member of that inner circle. John was known as the “*Beloved Disciple*”. He was a mighty influence in the early church, writing five books of the New Testament. John was the only Apostle not put to death for his faith, but he was persecuted, imprisoned and banished to the Isle of Patmos where he received the Revelation.
- **Andrew** — He was the brother of Peter. He had been a fisherman before he came to Christ and every time he appears in the Gospel record, he is bringing someone to Jesus. Andrew was a powerful witness for the Lord Who saved him.
- **Philip** — Not much is known about Philip. Jesus calls him in [John 1:43](#). Immediately Philip goes to tell Nathaniel (Bartholomew) about Jesus, [John 1:44-45](#).
- **Bartholomew** — He is also known as Nathaniel. He seems to have been a man with some issues with prejudice, [John 1:45-46](#). He was also a man of honesty and deep religious conviction, [John 1:47](#).
- **Matthew** — Matthew was a Jew named Levi. He had been a tax collector for Rome. He was a controversial choice and was no doubt despised by many of the people, [Mark 2:14](#). But, the

Lord called him, saved him and changed his life. Matthew would write the Gospel that bears his name.

- **Thomas** — This man is sometimes condemned as a doubter. We do know that he was loyal to Jesus, even to the point of being willing to die with Him, [John 11:16](#). He was the only disciple not cowering in fear in the upper room on the day Jesus rose from the dead, [John 20:25](#). He was a doubter of the unseen, but willing to accept the truth when it was revealed to him, [John 20:28](#).
- **James the son of Alphaeus** — Nothing is known about this man. We do know his mother was at the cross when Jesus was crucified, [John 19:25](#).
- **Thaddaeus** — Nothing is revealed about Thaddaeus in Scripture other than his being a disciple of Christ.
- **Simon the Canaanite** — The word “*Canaanite*” translates a word that means “*zealous*”. Simon was a revolutionary. He was a Jew sworn to over-throw the Roman government. He was probably idealistic, proud, radical, outspoken, fiery and fearless.
- **Judas Iscariot** — Judas was the only disciple to come from Judea. He was the treasurer of the group, but he was a thief and a miser, [John 12:5-6](#). Judas was never truly saved and would eventually betray Jesus into the hands of the Jews for thirty pieces of silver, [Matt. 26:7-15](#). He died lost and went to Hell. ⁱ

IV. The Perplexity after the Call (20-21) – No doubt this was a time of great excitement and anticipation for the twelve, but their moment of peaceful serenity is short lived. Notice:

A. The Annoyance (20) – [And the multitude cometh together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread](#). I fear to sound negative regarding the Lord’s work, but the disciples soon found it hard to even have a meal. Jesus’ popularity had grown such that they were continually bombarded by those who sought Him, desiring to receive something from Him. No doubt the disciples had to learn to deal with such demands, and find a way to avoid becoming angry or disgruntled by the crowds that continually gathered.

- Serving the Lord isn’t always easy, and it can be quite demanding at times. We too must learn to deal with the expectations of others and the constant distractions. We must stay close to the Lord for strength and compassion. I never want to develop a negative attitude about serving the Lord and His church. A disgruntled pastor once said, “Ministry would be easy if it wasn’t for the people.” He failed to realize that “people” were his focus and reason for ministry!

B. The Assumption (21) – [And when his friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself](#). We have already discovered the troubles Jesus endured with the

Pharisees, but they weren't the only ones who were skeptical of Jesus and His ministry. Even His friends and family questioned His motives and actions. Those who knew Him well thought He had lost His mind. These came in an attempt "to reason with Jesus and convince Him to abandon the journey He was pursuing." They wanted to convince Jesus to give up His efforts and come home.

- Don't be surprised when others, even those closest to you, fail to understand or appreciate your efforts for the Lord. Like the distractions from the crowds, we must also learn to deal with, and overcome the negative comments and assumptions regarding our service. Those who are not following the Lord, or serving in a similar way, will never understand what you are trying to accomplish. We cannot allow the actions or opinions of others hinder our efforts.

Conclusion: I hope you have been challenged and encouraged by our study today. The Lord has a work for every believer. If you are saved by His grace, there is a place of service for you. There will be obstacles to overcome, and opposition to face, but nothing compares to being used of the Lord according to His plan.

If you sense the Lord is leading you into an area of service, I encourage you to respond to His call in obedient submission. If you are yet unsaved, come to Him by faith and receive salvation.

ⁱ Adapted from The Sermon Notebook - The Sermon Notebook – Mark (WORDsearch Electronic Edition, Lifeway Inc.)