

Twelve Apostles Chosen

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0 : 00] Praise God we have the living, His living Word that we can read. We have it in our language. Some don't have it in their language. And we have it freely we can read without fear of persecution.

So let's read it again now. The book of Mark, it's the second book of the New Testament. Mark chapter 3. And we're reading from verse 7 through to verse 19.

Mark chapter 3 verse 7. This is the Word of God. Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed.

When they heard all He was doing, many people came to Him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon.

Because of the crowd, He told His disciples to have a small boat ready for Him to keep the people from crowding Him. For He had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch Him.

[1 : 05] Whenever the evil spirits saw Him, they fell down before Him and cried out, You are the Son of God. But He gave them strict orders not to tell who He was. Jesus went up on the 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 and to have authority to drive out demons. 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 Boanages, which means son of thunder or sons of thunder.

Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.

Amen. Let us hear the word of God preached. Isn't the love of Jesus something wonderful?

[2 : 10] Every one of us had a sin debt that we could not pay. It would have taken all of eternity to be paying and never pay the last payment. But God the Son so loved us that He became a man to pay the debts of His people.

You see, God cannot suffer and die. And so God became a man so that He might suffer and die in the place of His people. Taking their punishment upon Himself on the cross of Calvary and suffering the infinite wrath of God.

He rose again victorious over sin and death and hell. And so He's come on the most loving and gracious mission to save the very people that hated Him and rebelled against Him.

And so having grown up in a small out-of-the-way village in Nazareth, at age 30 then, Jesus begins His public ministry, preaching the good news of salvation and going about doing good, healing and saving people.

And so we might think, surely such a kind Savior on such a gracious mission will be accepted and welcomed by all.

[3 : 31] But no. Mark has been busy telling us in this gospel throughout chapter 2 that early hostility met Jesus as He began to carry on His public ministry.

The Pharisees, the religious leaders of Israel, hated Him because He didn't kowtow to them and agree with all their rules.

He claimed, Jesus claimed to forgive sins and they said, you're blaspheming, only God can forgive sins. But He was God. He didn't keep His distance from tax collectors and sinners, but ate with them and evangelized them and befriended them with the gospel.

And they thought He was sinning by doing so. Jesus didn't keep their sad traditional fasting days of the Old Testament.

Those traditional fasts. Fasting every Monday and Thursday like the Pharisees. He didn't follow their many harsh and silly man-made rules about how to keep the Sabbath in such a way that it turned the blessing of the day into a burden.

[4 : 41] And each time they saw Jesus differing with them, they criticized Him. And Jesus would answer in such a way that would leave them speechless. They could not answer.

It only increased their hatred of Jesus to the point where they're now plotting how to kill Him. That's how chapter 3 and verse 6 ended. And we're beginning in verse 7 then today.

It's then that Mark tells us that Jesus withdrew. They're trying to kill Him. Jesus withdraws to a more remote place, indeed many remote places, with His disciples along the Sea of Galilee.

This was not a cowardly fear. This was an intentional retreat. Later, He'll lay down His life. He'll say, who are you looking for? Jesus of the...

I'm He. Take me. So it's not fear. It's a strategic retreat. Because though He'll lay His life down, it will be on His timetable and not theirs.

[5 : 50] His time was not yet come. And so He's not going to continue aggravating these enemies, provoking a premature death. He still had the Father's work to do, the gospel to preach, people to save and heal, men to train to build His church once He's gone.

But even in these remote places, we read that large crowds followed Him there. Though their religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus, these flocked to see Jesus.

We can't help but see the contrast. And it wasn't just those from the region of Galilee that came to Him. They came from great distances and from all directions.

From Judea and Jerusalem in the south. And even beyond the borders of Israel, in the deep south, in Idumea. They came from the region across the Jordan River to the east, east and from the northwest around Tyre and Sidon.

The land of the Gentiles that Isaiah 9 spoke of, that a people living there would see a great, a people sitting in darkness would see a great light. Yes, they came to see Jesus.

[7 : 07] And Mark tells us what drew these people to Jesus. What was the attraction? Verse 8, When they heard all He was doing, many people came to Him.

His amazing works of mercy and love to heal the sick with just a word and immediately they were healed. Driving out demons that had taken possession of people's personalities.

And with a word, the demons were gone. So we can understand why people would flock to Jesus. A miracle worker is here.

And I'm sure if you or one of your loved ones had some disease or injury or crippling a problem, you'd travel far too, wouldn't you?

To bring them to Jesus, to have them healed. I'd come just to see them heal others. To see these wonders that cause people to be amazed. And so the news of a real miracle worker spread far and wide and fast.

[8 : 11] And so the masses have come. And they were so desperate to be healed that it caused a problem. It's the problem of crowd control.

Verse 10 says, Because He had healed many, those with diseases were pushing forward to touch Him. Remember that woman that said, If I can just touch the hem of His garment, I'll be healed. And so they're pushing forward.

And Jesus dealt with this problem in a very practical way. Verse 9, Because of the crowd, He told His disciples to have a small boat ready for Him. To keep the people from crowding Him.

More literally, from crushing Him. From thronging Him. Now, we've read or seen in the news this happening at concerts and sporting events, haven't we?

When the crowds want to get in closer. And even crushing people to death. As someone behind you is pushing, you can't stop.

[9 : 13] And so you end up crushing each other. Well, Jesus deals with it this way. He says to His men, Have a boat ready.

And when this happens, I'll get into the boat. We'll push out a ways from the shore. And I can safely teach them from my floating pulpit.

So, Mark says that Jesus was not only preaching and healing people, it says He was also casting out demons. Demons that had possessed people and were ruining their lives.

Verses 11 and 12. Whenever the evil spirits saw Jesus, they fell down before Him and cried out or screeched, You are the Son of God.

Interesting, the demons knew who Jesus is when their religious leaders of the Jews did not know. But Jesus gave the evil spirits strict orders not to tell who He was.

[10:21] Now, why? Why would He do that? Well, perhaps a couple reasons. The Holy Son of God does not want evil spirits advertising for Him. He doesn't want their endorsement as if they are in league with Him.

That will be a charge brought up against Him later on in this very chapter, verse 22. When the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem will say, He's possessed by Beelzebub, the prince of demons.

And by the prince of demons, He is driving out demons. You see, Jesus is in league with the devil. That's where this power comes from. So, Jesus doesn't want any appearance of collusion between Him and devils.

You know, even manufacturers in our own day are learning, aren't they, that they need to be careful about who they choose to be spokesmen for their products. I think Budweiser is learning that lesson.

That if you get the wrong person out there speaking and advertising for your product, it can boomerang upon you and actually do more harm than good. Jesus doesn't want demons preaching for Him.

[11:29] Neither does He want them telling who He is. And then there's also the fact that Jesus was now beginning to reveal His glory as God in the flesh and as Messiah, but it's all according to His own timetable.

He does not want it to be up front right now this early in His ministries to precipitate a crisis before it was His time to die.

You know, it would be His claim to be the Son of God that would do Him in in the end. That would be the final straw for which the religious leaders would condemn Him to death. But you see, it's not yet time for Him to die.

There's still much to do. More preaching, more healing, more training of His disciples. So Mark gives us this interesting snapshot into Jesus' public ministry at this period.

Let me just leave you with a couple lessons before we move on to the Twelve Apostles. The first is that as the Gospel of Jesus advances, opposition arises not only from the spiritual leaders of the Jews, but also from hell itself.

[12:41] We'll see it next time, too, as chapter 3 goes on. It's like all hell breaks loose to resist this Gospel, good news, salvation that Jesus is bringing to the earth.

And demons, these evil spirits, supernatural, fallen angels that join Satan in his rebellion against God who hate God and hate people who are made in the image of God and are holding people in chains of darkness, deception, and destruction.

They begin to attack Jesus and His ministry. The Bible teaches that there are these unseen evil spirits that want you in hell. We read it in 1 Peter that the devil, like a roaring lion, seeks whom he may devour.

And though these demons may not be possessing you as they were these people that we read of, Satan and his demons are working hard to keep you blinded so that you cannot see the greatness and goodness of Jesus Christ.

And that's why the world today looks at Jesus and yawns. They see no glory in Him that they should want Him, desire Him, and receive Him for salvation.

[13:56] Satan is working hard to keep you blinded, to keep you believing the devil's lies about God, about you, about your eternal destiny. They work hard to keep you bound in the unbreakable chains of your sins.

And these spiritual enemies of you are far too strong for you to overcome. Only Jesus has power to set you free. For if the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed.

Really free. But you say, I'm not aware of any evil spirits talking to me. I don't see any chains about me. I don't hear any lies.

Of course not. Their strategy is to remain hidden behind the scenes. They have the world to tell their lies. They can whisper in your ear without you even knowing who it is that's suggesting these things to you to make you think that you are free to do whatever you want to do when all the while what you want to do is exactly what they want you to do.

Which is to sin against God and to stay away from Jesus and his so great salvation. Well, 1 John 5:19 says, we know, we believers know, we've read the book and we know that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

[15:19] And Jesus has come into this world. He's broken into enemy territory and he's come to seek and to save and to set free those who are held in Satan's bondage.

And so Satan and his hellish crew are all out to resist him and to keep men in the darkness of Satan's lies and sin.

You see, it's the most serious spiritual warfare and it's all about your soul. You're never dying soul. You're the one who's being fought for.

So, believers, in seeking to see people saved, we don't fight with the weapons of this world. No, the weapons we fight with are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. And through these weapons of prayer and the word of God, we can see every thought brought into captivity to Jesus Christ and obedience to him.

But then there's a second lesson from this snapshot and it's not only the fact that Satan does not want Christ's mission to succeed, it's that interest in healing is not the same thing as a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

[16:38] You can come to get healing of your body without the healing of your soul. And that's why people were coming from all over.

The miracles that Jesus was doing. As long as the miracles flowed like wine, they called him wonderful, they came to dying. But nobody wanted him when he called them to forsake their sins and to entrust themselves to be saved by Jesus Christ from their sins.

They didn't want to be saved from their sins. When Jesus Christ came calling them to yield to him as their king and ruler, they didn't want him to be king and ruler over them.

And when he appeared weak and beaten and bloodied and chained by the Romans, the crowds cried, crucify him, crucify him.

They didn't want him as the savior from sin. What they wanted was the miracles. You know what miracles were? They were indicators that proved that Jesus is indeed the Messiah, that he is indeed the son of God, the savior, the Lord of all.

[17:52] But miracles of their own did not make believers out of men. No generation saw more miracles done and done upon their own bodies and bodies of their uncles and aunts and brothers and sisters and parents and people they knew than these people that lived on the day in the days of Christ's ministry on earth.

Yet few believed on him unto salvation. Few saw that they had a sin problem that needed Jesus to forgive them by his shedding his blood on Calvary for sinners.

They wanted his miracles, but not him and not the salvation from sin that he came to give. It's a wicked generation that craves the signs and rejects the savior to whom the signs pointed to.

That's the reason for the signs. You need this Jesus. This is him. This is God in the flesh and this miracle is proving it. Who else can speak and a withered hand immediately is healed.

This is God. He's here. Listen to him. He's come to save. Well, we come then to the calling of the twelve apostles.

[19:09] Now there were three different names given to describe people following Jesus in these days. Think of it as three concentric circles. You have the big circle, a smaller circle, and a real small circle inside.

So let's look at first the big circle. We've just been introduced to them. They're the crowds that came to see Jesus. This was a real mixed bag.

We'll see that in chapter four when Jesus describes the responses of the various people that came to hear him and as he preached the gospel. There's different responses. That's the big crowd, you see.

But within that crowd, there's a smaller circle of disciples. They were more committed to hearing the Son of God and following him, learning from him and doing what he said.

And then from that circle of disciples, there's an even smaller circle of twelve men that Jesus chose whom he called apostles.

[20:09] So that's where we're at here in Mark's gospel. These apostles, verses 13 to 15, Jesus went up on a mountainside. You know, a lot of important things happened on mountains in Jesus' ministry.

And now he's going up on a mountainside and he called to him those he wanted. They were his choice. He says to them later, you have not chosen me, but I've chosen you and ordained you to go and bring forth fruit that will last.

And so he chose those he wanted and they came to him. Out of these disciples, he's chosen these twelve. He appointed twelve designating them apostles that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and have authority to drive out demons.

So you see the three circles. The crowd, the disciples, the committed followers of Jesus, and then out of those twelve men whom he designated apostles.

Sometimes they're called disciples, the twelve disciples. That's because the apostles were disciples. They were followers of Jesus, but they are special disciples. They have been given a unique office in Christ's mission and church, the office of apostle.

[21 : 26] Many times the Bible refers to them just as the twelve. And when he says the twelve, we know who he means. They're listed for us here. But the fact that there are twelve says something important to us.

Can you think of a twelve in the Old Testament with regard to the people of God in the Old Covenant? About the twelve tribes, the twelve sons of Jacob who then became the twelve tribes of Jacob.

And so we're being taught that there's continuity between Christ's church in the New Testament and with the Old Testament twelve tribes of Israel. And that's why Paul will refer in Galatians 6 to the church as the Israel of God.

We are the Israel of God under the new constitution of the new covenant. The wine, the new wine is being poured into new wineskins, not the old covenant, but the new covenant.

But there's continuity here. And that's what's seen in the number twelve. Now, so important was this group of twelve that Luke tells us that Jesus spent the whole night in prayer before choosing them.

[22 : 37] We certainly, in choosing leaders, need to give ourselves to prayer. But what were their unique tasks to which they were called?

Well, notice first of all, they were appointed, called and appointed that they might be with Him. Now, that might sound vanilla, but it's important.

They were called to be with Him. In less than three years, Jesus is going to return to heaven and no longer be there with His disciples, His apostles.

Now, that's not a lot of time to train the men through whom Jesus is going to build His universal church. And as we'll see, these men have a lot to learn if they're to carry on the mission of Christ after He's gone.

So, first of all, these apostles were called to be with Him, bodily, physically, with Him. Not just for a six- to eight-hour classroom instruction somewhere.

[23 : 43] No, these twelve must leave all and follow Him that wherever He is, they are. That they might be with Him all the time wherever He goes.

that they might listen to Him preaching, teaching, in all contexts, whether one-on-one, whether a small group around the table, whether the multitudes gathered at the seashore, they must learn from Him.

He's going to leave them. They're going to have to carry on after He's gone. So, they must learn from Him and become fishers of men like He fishes for men. And how do they learn that?

But to fish with Him, to watch Him fish for men. How to deal with people of all kinds, the religious and the irreligious. Those who are found in the synagogues every week and wouldn't miss, wouldn't think of missing, and those who never darken the door of a church.

How do we deal with both kinds? And how do we treat our enemies? Jesus showed them how to deal with enemies. They were to watch Him interacting with people.

[24 : 56] They were to see His works, His miracles, that they might become eyewitnesses. They were to listen to what He said so that they could be earwitnesses of what He taught.

So that later on, through the Scriptures, they might tell us exactly what Jesus did and said. Isn't it wonderful that we have the truth about what Jesus said and what He did?

Well, most of that came from these 12 men who were with Jesus and saw it and heard it themselves and passed it down to us in the New Testament Scriptures.

well, they were chosen to be with them. In Acts 1, when the 11 later are choosing an apostle to replace Judas who had committed suicide, Peter says, it's necessary to choose one of the men who

have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us.

You see, you can't just choose anybody to be a witness of the resurrection. No, they've got to be with us from the very beginning of Jesus' ministry to the end, even His resurrection.

[26 : 14] And so, they were to be with Him that He might correct them as well when they were so sadly mistaken about His mission as Messiah, why He's come. They needed Him with them to correct them about their misunderstandings about greatness in the kingdom of God.

What does it mean to be great in the kingdom of God? They needed Him to correct them about His attitude toward children as if He didn't have time for children as they chased the parents of children away.

They needed Him to teach them about priorities, about keeping the main things, the main things, about loving one another and humbly serving each other.

And all of this, you see, by being with them. I don't think it's a stretch to think of those three years that Jesus had with them as a three-year camping trip.

You really get to know somebody when you camp with them, don't you? Some of you have camped with each other for a week. You see each other in the best and the worst of the situation. It's tight quarters, maybe rain and mud in the tent and on and on it goes.

[27 : 28] Think, not a week, not three weeks, but three years camping with Jesus. And it wasn't Jesus that made that difficult. It was the other in the twelve that made it such a problem.

But they saw Jesus in the most difficult circumstances, the greatest temptations to sin. And they saw that he was uniquely different from them.

He was holy, blameless, and pure without sin. And they saw their own sins come to the surface in those situations.

It reminds me of our friend Sam Oluwach down in Nairobi training men for the ministry. He actually has them come and live with him and his wife Mellie.

that they might be with him and see him in the home. And what does marriage, Christian marriage look like? See him on the streets. What does it mean to evangelize?

[28 : 31] See him in the church. What does it mean to be a shepherd of a flock? That's the idea. There's a whole lot more to be learned than what can be learned in a classroom. And so Jesus called them first of all to be in the school of Christ meant being with him.

So he called them to him. But secondly, he called and appointed the twelve that he might send them out to preach and have authority to drive out demons. Indeed, the word apostle means sent one.

So once they were trained, Jesus would send them out to carry on his mission. We'll see that in chapter 6. He sends them out to preach. He gives them opportunities, but especially as he ascends into heaven, he leaves them with that mission that he's been doing and says, you now go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Baptize them and teach them to obey everything I've commanded you. So that's why he called them to be with them, to be with him, that he might then send them out to preach.

The word for preach means herald. To herald. It's the picture of the man who was the messenger of the king. And so he would come into your village riding on a horse and the banner of the king was there and he'd come to the very town center, probably some soldiers with him.

[29 : 59] And he'd roll out the banner, the ensign of the king and he'd blow his trumpet and he'd say, hear ye, hear ye, and everyone would gather. And what came next was not his own ideas and his own laws, but rather the word of their king.

And because it was the word of the king, he's just a herald, a messenger boy. What he said carried the authority not of him, but of the king. You disobey this, you have the king to deal with.

This is his word. And that's what these apostles were. They were sent to herald out the king's message. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, his laws, his gospel.

And as they did so, it carried the authority of Christ. Jesus says to them, he who receives you receives me. And he who receives me receives the one who sent me.

So Jesus is the apostle sent by the father and he chose 12 apostles whom he sent. And you see the authority chain. The message of these men going out with the gospel carries the very authority of heaven.

[31 : 12] And not only to preach, but also to have authority and power given to them to drive out demons and to heal themselves like Jesus was doing. Paul will call these the signs of an apostle.

How do you know who's an apostle and who isn't? Everybody can claim to be an apostle, a spokesman for God. We still have it today. The Lord told me this. The Lord told me that. Well, how do we know who the true apostles are? Well, they perform signs, wonders, miracles. And that's why they were given this authority to drive out demons and to heal.

It proved that their words came with the same authority that they are showing by doing God-like things. So their words are God's words. Pay attention to them.

They are the apostles. apostles. And so, even so, we now who hear the preaching of God's word in scriptures, these have been passed down to us from Christ-authorized apostles.

[32 : 21] And we'll be held accountable with what we do with their words because their words are Christ's words. prophets. And you see, they played an important role in the building of the church.

Paul says in Ephesians 2.20 and to 22 that God's household is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. With Christ, Jesus himself is the chief cornerstone and in him the whole body is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

some of you are builders. How many times do you lay a foundation in the building of a, in the constructing of a building?

You don't keep laying foundations. Well, that's what some people would like to think that we should continually have apostles who can prove that they speak the word of God by doing miracles.

No, no. There are no apostles today. We have the apostles' words that have been vindicated by signs and wonders and it's been written down for us this is all we need.

[33 : 26] We don't need new signs and wonders. We have the old signs and wonders. We've been looking at them in Mark's account. Peter, eyewitness, ear witness, telling Mark what happened and Mark writing it down.

So we see the important role of the apostles. Jesus said, I will build my church. Well, he is building it and the foundation of the words of the apostles and prophets once for all given to the church passed down from Jesus to them and them to us.

Well, let's not miss the heart of Jesus in all of this. Why is he doing this? Why is he training these twelve men? Why is he having them listen to him and watch him?

He's wanting more and more people to hear the most important truth they'll ever hear, the good news about how guilty, hell-deserving sinners can be forgiven and made right with God.

It's only through Jesus Christ and that's the message that he entrusted to his apostles, that they might then entrust it to the church, that this message might continue going out into all the world even as it is today.

[34 : 45] We prayed for Serbia, the gospels being preached in Serbia. We support missionaries in Africa, in France, in Switzerland, all over the world and that's because Christ wants his gospel known because no one can be saved apart from this gospel.

So he's training men who are with him so that they might be sent out to carry out this gracious mission of Christ. What a kind Savior he is.

And that message has found us here in the United States of America. This is why, because Christ was careful to pass it on to his apostles who have given it to us in God's holy word.

So he's wanting you and I coming along 2,000 years later to hear the true gospel and not all of the false gospels that are out there. And we can be sure we have it from the mouth of our Savior through his apostles.

We don't need something different. We don't need a new word from heaven. We have all that God needs to say to us right here. He's written it down in infallible record of the way of salvation.

[36 : 00] What are you doing with that message from heaven? Receive it as from God through Christ. Obey it. Receive it in the love of it.

Build your life upon it. Well, what remains of our text are the names of the 12 men Jesus chose and appointed apostles. You're familiar with them?

I won't take the time to read them. But having read the New Testament, we know something about these men, don't we? This isn't the only thing we know about them, what we see here in terms of their names.

Let me give you just a few observations about these in the 12. The first thing is they're all very ordinary men. Very ordinary men.

Four of them were fishermen. There's a tax collector. There's a zealot. There's other occupations.

[37 : 10] But they're all men with sins. All men with failures that are not hidden from us in Scripture. Well, what else did Jesus have to choose from but failed men?

When he chose 12. Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter. Peter meaning rock. A fisherman. Mentioned first because he's often the spokesman and leader of the 12. We know how impetuous and impulsive Peter could be because we've read the Bible.

He's hardly steadfast and rock-like. He's here, he's there, he's everywhere. One moment confessing Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The next moment taking Jesus aside, the Son of the living God and rebuking him forever saying he's going to suffer and die. And one moment saying he's willing to die with Jesus and just hours later denying three times that he even knows him.

[38 : 19] Impetuous, impulsive, unfaithful. Then there's James and his brother John, also fishermen. And Jesus gave them the name Boanerges, which means sons of thunder.

And there's some questions about what that means, but it's not a real promising title. As if to expect trouble. Where there's thunder, there's lightning.

And we find these fellas ready to call down fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan village that did not welcome Jesus, for which they received a rebuke from their Savior.

Luke chapter 9. Other fiery outbursts. John said, Teacher, we saw a man driving out demons in your name, and we told him to stop because he's not one of us. Jesus says, don't stop him, John. He's not against us, he's for us. Mark chapter 10, James and John came to Jesus on the sly, apart from the other ten. He said, let one of us sit on your right hand and the other on your left hand in your glory.

[39 : 28] And Jesus had to rebuke them again. And when the other apostles found out, they were indignant with James and John.

Jesus had to sort them out about true greatness in the kingdom of God to be the slave of all. Then there's Bartholomew, Nathanael, another name for him.

And when Philip told him, we found the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, you remember his reply. Nazareth? Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Well, he would find out.

Yes, the Son of God become man comes out of Nazareth. And there's Matthew. We've read his conversion already in Mark's account, named Levi as well.

He had been a low-down tax collector, collecting taxes from his fellow Jews to the occupying Roman government. So he's a collaborator with the enemy, with the Romans who have the Jews under their heels and he's collecting taxes from his kinsmen to give to Rome.

[40 : 36] And then there's Simon the Zealot. He belongs to this party of the Jews called the Zealots and they were very zealous for the independence of Israel. And they were known for their hatred of the ruler that was put over them and was charging them taxes.

Indeed, these Zealots would also stir up rebellion against the occupying Romans. So here they are on the same team. Matthew, the collaborator with the Romans and Simon the Zealot who hates the collaborators with Rome.

And they're on the same team. I don't suppose you could find a more far-right conservative politician and far-left liberal politician put together on the same committee that would be anything like Matthew and Simon on the same apostleship.

But that's where they are with differences this far apart. No wonder Jesus had to continually sort them out as they were arguing among themselves who was the greatest.

Unwilling to wash each other's dirty feet, they all fled at his arrest. They were all slow to believe all that the scriptures had spoken and even what Jesus himself had said to them over and over and over about his suffering and death and resurrection.

[42 : 06] Chasing away parents with young children as if Jesus had no time for them. And then there was Judas Iscariot bringing up the rear. Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus.

For what? The price of a slave. Thirty pieces of silver. So the twelve that Jesus picked were not exactly the dream team.

That's what I'm saying. Yet, through these very men, Jesus Christ would turn the world upside down. These men, very ordinary men, but with an extraordinary Lord and Master.

And what an impact Jesus Christ had in their lives. The differences Christ made in their lives is astounding. Peter goes from being this impulsive, unfaithful all over the sheet to being as steadfast as a rock.

His cowardice is replaced with bold proclamation of Christ in Jerusalem, the very place where his Savior was crucified just seven weeks earlier.

[43 : 14] And three thousand are converted in a day. He's beaten and threatened to preach no more in Jesus name and he continued preaching Christ day after day.

And was eventually willing to die for his Master and Savior in martyrdom. But only after he gave us two books of the New Testament, one we finished reading today and we'll start the second letter next week, first and second Peter.

And he was the one who influenced Mark to write the gospel that we are presently studying. Then there's James, one of the sons of thunder. He became the first martyr of the twelve, laying down his life for the Savior, beheaded by Herod.

And his brother John, the other son of thunder, these who were ready to call down fire from heaven on anybody that didn't agree. He becomes known as the apostle of love.

And having studied first John on Sunday evenings, we know why. Having read the gospel of John, we know why. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes on him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

[44 : 29] And on and on, love one another, love one another, love one another. By this all men will know that you love one another. He's the apostle of love. Oh, what a difference Jesus made in this son of thunder.

Jerome, an early church father, records for us how in the extreme old age, John was carried into the congregation by the arms of his friends. And he was unable to say anything except little children love one another.

Back he'd go to his room. Next week they'd carry him in. Little children love one another. Week after week until wearied that he always said the same thing, they asked, why do you always say this? Because it's the Lord's command. And if it is done, and if this only is done, it is enough. For the fulfilling of the law is to love.

We admire the power of Jesus Christ to transform hot heads with anger issues into sweet lovers of God and his people. There's Matthew the tax collector and Simon the zealot.

[45 : 53] We'd never choose to put those two on the same committee, would we? But Jesus did to show his power to reconcile one to another.

Like Jesus, the great peacemaker, has come to reconcile those who are the farthest apart, the holy God and us, the hell-deserving sinner. And by his life and death and resurrection, he has brought us to God, restored us to God, and has restored us to each other, Jew and Gentile, tax collector and former tax collector and former zealot, one in Christ Jesus.

Thomas, who was sometimes slow to believe in Jesus' resurrection, it was all to serve a purpose. That by his reluctant testimony, he comes to say, I do see you are alive from the dead, my Lord and my God.

You see, what about Judas? Iscariot? Did Jesus make a mistake in calling Judas as an apostle? Not at all. Proverbs 16, 4, the Lord works out everything for his own ends, even the wicked for a day of disaster.

By his own evil choice, Judas played a part in fulfilling God's eternal plan of salvation through the crucifixion of Christ. He was sent to hell for his sin, but God used even what was evil for good to thousands, yea, millions more than can be numbered who have been saved by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in which Judas had a role in betraying him into the hands of the chief priest so that grace and forgiveness can flow to millions of us sinners who now trust in Jesus.

[47 : 52] Yet Judas stands as a warning to us all. If Judas fell from the highest office in the church, that of being an apostle, let us take heed lest we fall.

God uses these twelve. They were ordinary men with an extraordinary master. And the apostle Paul tells us choosing ordinary men is intentional on God's part.

It's, yes, in one sense that's all he has to work with, but he chose some real doozies too and some real weak men too. And it was all intentional so that he would get all the glory.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4, 7, he put this treasure of the gospel ministry, he put that sweet treasure of the gospel in jars of clay.

That's what we are. fragile earthen vessels, easily chipped and broken. Why? Why would God choose men like this so that he might show that this all surpassing power of conversion and saving sinners is not from man, but is from God.

[49 : 06] And so he receives the glory. He receives the praise. man's weakness magnifies God's power. God doesn't need men and women of great intellect and skill to accomplish his work.

Ordinary men and women. Who are much with Jesus. Learning of him, following him in the gospels, learning of him to fish for men.

Acts chapter 4, we see the Jewish religious leaders who crucified Jesus just weeks earlier have jailed two of his apostles for preaching in Jesus name and it's Peter and John.

And they brought them out the next day for trial and Peter boldly preached salvation is found in no other name for there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved than the name of Jesus.

And when they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, they hadn't been through the schools of the Jewish leaders and rabbis, saw that they were unschooled ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

[50 : 32] You see, that's the training. That's the school to make disciples, men and women, boys and girls who are with Jesus and learn from him and then spread the good news to others.

This world needs to see what can be done by those who are much with Jesus, drinking in his word and spirit. what was this Lord Jesus like that such characters like we've read of would be changed by his overpowering love and amazing grace.

What is the love of God in Christ that wants you to get this message to every man and woman, boy and girl, to not keep it to yourself so that they might be set free from the chains of sin and Satan that bind them, the lies of the devil that blind them and have them living for all the wrong things until they wake up a second after death to find they live for the wrong things.

And now have an eternity to pay for it. When all along they could have trusted in Jesus and received him and his everlasting salvation.

my lost sinner friend, don't let another day go by rejecting Jesus. He's the only Savior. There is no other. Religion can't save you.

[52 : 02] Your good deeds can't save you. Only Christ living for us, dying for us, rising again for us and now seated in heaven for us can save us. Will you receive him just now?

There's nothing more important that you ever will do. Later, that's the devil's word, later you might forget about Jesus. This could be the most interested you will ever be in the eternal salvation of your soul.

Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he's near. He may never be nearer to you than he is right now. Receive him and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.

What a gracious Lord. What a gracious Savior. Let's pray. Father, thank you for sending your son to be the Savior of sinners.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you were willing to become a man that you might suffer and die in the place of your people that our sins might be forgiven and blotted out and remembered no more against us.

[53 : 11] We might not perish in hell forever but have eternal life with you in heaven. And thank you, Holy Spirit, for inspiring your apostles to write down the things that Jesus said and did that we might have confidence that we hold in our hands the true gospel of the true Savior, the only way to God.

Send this gospel abroad, we pray, empower this day and save many. We ask it in Jesus' name and for his praise. Amen.