

Mark 3:16-19 The Characteristics of the Twelve Apostles

Last week we began Mark chapter 3 verses 13 through 19 and we focused on verses 13, 14, and 15. And today, Lord willing, we would like to finish out this section.

In chapter 3 in verses 1 through 6 we saw Jesus cured the man that had the withered hand. In verses 7 through 12 we saw the confession of demons. That even the demons, as verse 11 tells us, **And whenever the unclean spirits were observing Him, they were falling down before Him, and were crying out, saying, "You Yourself are the Son of God!"** Remember demons can confess the truth about Jesus because they believe the truth about Jesus, they just do not surrender to Him. He is not their Lord but they have to submit to the sovereignty of His authority. Verse 12 says, **And often He was rebuking them, in order that they might not make him known.** He will not take confession from demons as a testimony to Himself.

So last week we started verses 13 through 19, the choosing of the 12 apostles. Verse 13 says, **He goes up into the mountain, and He calls to Himself who He Himself was desiring: and they came to Him.** Three things:

- 1) He was calling. Jesus did the calling. It was not by voice or vote. It was not by asking for volunteers. Jesus called them.
- 2) Notice secondly, **to Himself.** It was to Jesus that He calls people. Not to a religious system but to Jesus.
- 3) And thirdly, He was calling to Himself **who He Himself was desiring.** The word *desiring* is the word for *will*, a person's will. It was the Lord's will that these apostles be chosen to come to Him.

We studied last week from I Corinthians chapter 12 verses 11 and 18, even the gifts of the Spirit are given in the body of Christ to those whom the Lord wills and decides on His own to do. Not people, people do not decide what God's will is. God works out His will in our midst.

And the outcome was, **and they came to Him.** Verse 14, **And He appointed twelve.** Notice, **He appointed.** We saw from Luke chapter 6 verse 13 that Luke uses the word *chosen*. He chose the twelve. Mark says, **He appointed the twelve.** Again, not voluntary. This was something that Jesus appointed and people that Jesus chose to be part of the twelve.

Then the purpose, first of all, **in order that they might be with Him.** See the purpose of Jesus calling people to Himself is that we might be with Him. That is the whole point of the Christian walk. Not to be with a religious system, but to be with Jesus, and to come to know Him and spend time with Him, and to be changed and transformed by Him. **And, secondly, in order that He might send them to preach, and to have authority to heal diseases, and to cast out the demons.** Jesus gave them, these twelve, His authority to preach, and to cast out demons, and to heal sicknesses.

I also take note that when you watch Jesus and His authority, when you watch the apostles and the authority that Jesus gave to them, they were one hundred percent successful

in our standards. There was no "failure because of a lack of faith." The authority of Jesus goes by one thing - His authority, not people's faith.

Now verse 16, verses 16 through 19 tells us about these twelve apostles. These are the characteristics of the apostles in verses 16 through 19.

Verse 16 says, **And He added to Simon *the name Peter*.** That is the literal translation. **He added to Simon *the name Peter*, Πέτρος (Petros)**, which means a *stone* or a *rock*. This is recorded - Jesus naming him - in John chapter 1 verses 41 through 42. Andrew, Simon Peter's brother responded to follow Jesus as a result of his response to the baptizing ministry of John the baptizer. In John chapter 1 verse 41 it says, **Andrew first found his brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah," which is translated, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.** Again, bringing people to Jesus, not to a religious system.

And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jona: you shall be called Cephas," (which is Aramaic) **which is translated, (Πέτρος, Petros) a stone.** So *Cephas* is the Aramaic name that is translated Πέτρος (Petros), a stone. So that is when Jesus renamed him, added a name to him, Simon Peter now.

Πέτρος (Petros) means *rock* or *stone*. He is going to be a rock. Of course he was not the rock until the Holy Spirit came in Acts chapter 2, then he became the rock. He was just a pebble kicked around in the road until the Holy Spirit came so Jesus renamed him Peter.

Now Simon (that would be Simon Peter) and Andrew and James and John that we are going to see next, were all partners in the fishing industry. So keep that in mind as we go through. We have got four fishermen in this group of twelve.

Verse 17 reads, **and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; he added to them *the names Boanerges, which is Sons of Thunder*.** Boanerges, Sons of Thunder is the translation. So here are two brothers, James and John, linked together and renamed the Sons of Thunder. We can see why from what is recorded in Luke chapter 9 verses 54 and 55. When Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem they came into a village. The people of the village wanted Jesus to stay for a while. When they saw that Jesus was heading on to Jerusalem the village rejected Him. So James and John the Sons of Thunder said to Jesus, "Do you want us to call fire down from heaven and consume them?" I mean they are ready to zap everybody. Anybody that looked at the Lord cross-eyed they just wanted to wipe them out. And Jesus said, **"You do not know of what spirit you are of. I did not come to destroy men's lives, I came to save lives."**

Then another text showing not only James and John and their personality of wanting to call fire down from heaven, but their mother. In Matthew chapter 20 verse 21 tells us that their mother came up at a time and asked Jesus, "When You get in Your kingdom can You let one of my sons sit on Your right hand and one on Your left?" She wanted positions of prominence for her sons. Of course this upset the disciples, you can imagine. James himself was the first martyr to be killed as recorded in Acts chapter 12. John we know is to be the apostle John, who John wrote the Gospel of John; I, II and III John; and the book of Revelation. He was the only one of the apostles that was not martyred. All were martyred

except John, he died a natural death. They tried to kill him, tradition says, by dipping him in burning oil but he did not die. So they exiled him off onto the island of Patmos. And it was there that he received what we know of today as the book of Revelation.

So James and John called The Sons of Thunder by Jesus. Jesus named them that because of their personalities. Keep that in mind as we are discerning what went on amongst the disciples as they traveled together for three years with Jesus.

Verse 18, **and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alpheus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite.**

First of all, **Andrew**. We saw Andrew earlier - he is Simon Peter's brother and brought Peter to Jesus, and both of them with James and John were in the fishing industry together.

And then there is **Philip**. Philip we know in John chapter 1 that he is the one that told Nathanael about Jesus. And you remember in John chapter 1 verse 47 that Nathanael was coming towards Jesus and Jesus said to him, "**Behold, an Israelite, in whom there is no deceit.**" And Nathanael said, "**How did You know me?**" And Jesus said "**Before Philip called you, I saw you sitting underneath the fig tree.**" So then Nathanael knew, He said, "**Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!**" Jesus could see him. He could see his heart. He can see right through him. So Nathanael knew that this was the Messiah.

The next name is **Bartholomew**. That is who Nathanael is, Nathanael's other name is Bartholomew. It was Philip who brought Nathanael, as we just read. Or in Mark's text he is called Bartholomew and told him about Jesus Christ and then Christ himself came and manifested himself to Nathanael and both of them eventually became apostles.

Then there is **Matthew**. Matthew is our tax collector that we have studied about. And can you imagine we have four fishermen who are Jews. We have Philip and we have Nathanael who are out-of-towners. We have Matthew who is considered to be a traitor by the Jews because he was collecting taxes for Rome. He is not the fisherman type, he is the accounting type and considered a traitor from a Jewish standpoint.

All of a sudden you have Jewish fishermen called out by Jesus to be a part of somebody who is a tax collector, an accountant, who is a desk job man, along with some big boot physical fishermen. Two of the fishermen were Sons of Thunder. So you have these personalities all mixed together. Though the four fishermen were Jewish they had to look down on Matthew because he collected taxes for Rome and was considered a traitor by the Jews. And like we just said, Philip and Nathanael, or Bartholomew, were out-of-towners and so they are outside of the context of Jerusalem itself.

And then there is **Thomas**. In John chapter 20 verse 24 it says Thomas was a twin. So he had a twin brother. He is called in theological circles *doubting Thomas*, that is what he is known by, because that is his personality. His personality was to doubt everything. You remember he was not in the room in John chapter 20 verses 24 through 29 when Jesus appeared after His resurrection. And when Thomas came together with the rest of the disciples they said, "Jesus is alive and we have seen Him!" But Thomas said, "I will not believe unless I put my finger through the nail prints in His hands and thrust my fist into His

side." And, of course, later on Jesus appeared and Thomas did not have to touch Him, he saw Him and he says, "My Lord and my God!" as he made the confession. And Jesus said, "**You believe because you see Thomas. Blessed are those who believe and do not see,**" who live by faith and go by faith.

I mean for three years, here you have got The Sons of Thunder wanting to call fire down from heaven to consume people, yet Thomas is saying, "I do not believe it until I see it." I mean you have got all these mixtures of personalities together for three years following Jesus.

Then there is **James the son of Alphaeus**. He is called in Mark chapter 15 verse 40, he is called *James the less*. The reason he is called James the less is because of his stature. He was probably very small, which is interesting too. Because you have these big musclebound fishermen and you have this little guy, James the son of Alphaeus.

Then there is **Thaddaeus**. The man is called Thaddaeus who is also called Judas and Jude in other lists. These two were brothers, that is, Thaddaeus and **James the son of Alphaeus**.

Then you have **Simon the Canaanite**. He is also called in other places, that is Luke chapter 6 verse 15 and Acts chapter 1 verse 13, he is called in these other places Simon the Zealot. That is very important. The Zealots is the name of a political group, they were The Zealots. To be *zealous* means to be *fervent* or *boiling*. He was the anti-Romans government group. He is the guy that would come in and he had a bandanna around his head and he is a rebel. He is in the underground movement called The Zealots that are trying to fight against and overthrow the Roman government.

Now can you imagine what he would think of Matthew, the tax collector traitor when he is a zealot for Jewish people? Yet you have got Matthew in the group who he recognizes is a friend of the Roman government. Can imagine what his response was? Even though Matthew belongs to Christ he is considered a traitor for what he did. And so now you have Simon the Zealot as part of this group.

Then verse 19, **and Judas Iscariot, who also delivered Him over** - literal translation. So lastly Judas who is from Iscariot or Iscarioth. *Iscariot* is not his last name, that is the city from where he is from and he would be separated from Judas was called Thaddaeus. They are not the same. **Judas who is from Iscariot who also betrayed Him**. Remember he sold Jesus out for thirty pieces of silver. He was the treasurer of the group and he betrayed Jesus. He had the love of money.

But in John chapter 6 we are told that Jesus chose someone who is going to betray Him and Jesus already knew it when He chose him. Not only because the Scripture says so, but we know in John chapter 6 that after the Lord fed twenty thousand people, the people came to Him and He says, "**You didn't come to Me because you saw the sign but because your stomachs were filled.**" And so you are following Me for free food, not because you saw the sign. So He says, "I am the bread from heaven and from now on you must eat of My flesh and drink of My blood." And so they all left, all twenty thousand people left when they heard that Jesus was not going to provide food for them but now they had to feed on Christ, metaphorically speaking His crucifixion and His life in the Spirit. But all twenty thousand left except for twelve, the twelve that Jesus called. That is quite a quite a sermon to give to

twenty thousand people and only have twelve people stick around afterwards. **Then He turns to the twelve**, (this is in John chapter 6) **and said, "Will you also go away?" And Peter says, "Where else can we go? You have the words of eternal life." And Jesus said to them** (in John chapter 6 verse 70), **"Have I not chosen you twelve? Again the word, chosen. "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"** The Lord already knew not only were there twelve from the twenty thousand left but even one of those of the twelve was of the devil. He was not of Christ. He was chosen by Christ, but he was not of Christ.

I think that is interesting. When you talk about Jesus choosing and appointing the twelve that Jesus actually chose somebody who is of the devil. He did not become evil, he was of the devil from the beginning so that when it came time to betray Jesus somebody of the devil would be there to fulfill that act. But I think it is interesting, Jesus chose him among the others. The Lord is in control. He is in charge of both the evil and the good.

So not only do we have big musclebound fisherman who are always asserting themselves. You have Matthew who is considered to be a traitor; and he is an accountant so he is totally different - personality and approach to life - than the other people. You have Thomas the doubter. You have all these other personalities mixed in and we do not know much about some of them, but we also have different kinds of personalities. But then you have a man who is in your midst who is scheming all the while against Jesus, yet playing the role of being a disciple. Now you put all these people together with Jesus for three years, walking over the hillsides. They would never have come together had Jesus not chosen them and called them out. These are not people who would personally choose the other people to be with. It is because of Christ.

So it is with the body of Christ. The Lord is not always going to put us with people that we are going to get along with, nor that we like by way of personality. Our personalities are not going to be alike. If you are looking for the Lord's will, do not look at it from a fleshly standpoint, look at it from a spiritual standpoint. It will probably be with people who rub your personality the wrong way. And if it was your choice you would not be there, then it is probably the Lord's will when the people do not get along or rub you the wrong way.

It is important to see the people come together not in a fleshy way, as I just said, but in a spiritual way to realize the only thing that we have in common is Christ. If it was not for Christ we probably would not get along outside of following the Lord because our interests and our lifestyles and our desires are all different. It is only because of Christ that we come together. Therefore it is important we function in the Spirit so that we can get along in Christ, and keep the unity of the Spirit.

So why is that significant? Not only to understand this group but to understand the working of the Lord. I say this by way of encouragement because I have had to be encouraged by the Lord through people many times. Jesus was in total control. You have to understand that when Jesus said the road to life and the road to truth is straight and narrow and very few will find it, but the broad gate, the wide gate is a broad road to destruction.

The Word of God is living and energizing and is a critic of the motives and intentions of the heart, says Hebrews chapter 4 verse 12. And it is not until the word of God challenges the motives and intentions of a person's heart that it becomes a ministry. And hearts are

corrupt, so we ought to be convicted and changed and transformed every time we hear the word of God. And some people just want to stay away from that.

Jesus did not want to stay away from it. He did not care if He had twenty thousand, or twelve, or six. Jesus did not want to stay away from it. He did not care if He had the twenty thousand or twelve, even if one of those was a devil. He was in total and complete charge. You might even get more respect from nonbelievers than you do Christians just because of the difference of personality and feelings. And people get their feelings hurt or people get offended. We are in a day and age when people get offended really easily. So if you are in the flesh and you are someplace where you are hearing the word, and the word is changing you and convicting you, you will probably find other people irritating to you and it will be a temptation to leave because of the other people. Or maybe because of the teacher. So you might even get more respect from nonbelievers than you do Christians. You will receive great comfort and blessing from some and you are going to get kicked by others.

I wanted to highlight the apostles and the fact that they spent three years without being filled with the Holy Spirit. So all of these personalities, all of these human reactions and responses to things were evident for three years while they followed Jesus around the hillside. It was not until Jesus sent the Holy Spirit that Simon became Peter, Peter became the stone. And these other personalities in spite of them - it does not say their personalities changed, but in spite of who they were as people it was the Spirit of God that kept them in unity and function for the one and the same purpose. And that is what we have to keep in mind. Some people are just going to get to us. Others will not. We like to hang around people that we like and we get along with. But it is not always the Lord's will. If we have to be where God changes us and transforms us at the hearing of the Word. That is what counts.

Let's close with prayer.