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Sermon Summary #10

Life Lessons from the Calling of the Twelve Mark 3:13-19

What possible relevance for us today is there in talking about *twelve dead dudes* that we've never met? Allow me to share with you five incredibly important and helpful lessons we learn from this text.

(1) We learn from this story how God delights in taking ordinary people and doing extraordinary things through them.

Stained-glass saints? No . . .

The first thing that stands out concerning these 12 men is that **nothing** stands out about them! They are boringly ordinary.

No academic achievement (although they were probably well taught in the OT)
Little to no wealth (aside from Matthew)
Virtually no social or political influence
Not sophisticated or culturally refined

Self doubt . . .

But Jesus is not looking for extraordinary people, but for ordinary people who can do ordinary things extraordinarily well because they serve a supernatural God. He sees you not for what you are in the world's eyes, but for what you are and can become by his grace!

The principle in evidence here is that our weakness is the opportunity for the display of his strength. Our ordinariness is the platform for his extraordinariness. Our being average is the opportunity for the display of his superlative power and glory and honor.

Consider **Gideon** (Judges 6-7) . . . See 2 Cor. 4:7.

I don't want you to get the idea that these guys are incompetent morons! Most of them owned businesses (primarily fishermen). All of them, no doubt, being Jews, had been raised and educated in a knowledge of the OT Scriptures. But overall they were **fairly average**.

- (1) Simon, whom Jesus called Peter
- (2) James and (3) John – sons of Zebedee (see Luke 9:52-56)
- (4) Andrew (Peter's brother)
- (5) Philip (John 6:5ff; 14:8)
- (6) Bartholomew (also called Nathanael; see John 1:46-47)
- (7) Matthew (former tax collector)
- (8) Thomas
- (9) James, the son of Alphaeus (possibly Matthew's brother; see Mark 15:40)
- (10) Thaddaeus (also called Judas, the son of James; Luke 6:15; see John 14:22)
- (11) Simon the Cananaean, also called Simon the Zealot (Luke 6:15)
- (12) Judas Iscariot

(2) We learn from this story the absolute necessity of persistent prayer before making important decisions

“In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and **all night he continued in prayer to God**. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles” (Luke 6:12-13).

Does it strike you as odd that Jesus actually prayed!

We need to learn from our Lord’s example. If Jesus felt the need for solitude, and considered it important enough to spend hours with God pouring out his heart and listening to the voice of his Father, how much more so you and me!

(3) We learn from this story that when it comes to the development of leaders in the body of Christ, you must first be willing to be *under* authority before you are placed *in* authority.

These men were *first disciples before they became apostles* . . .

What makes a man or woman a “**disciple**” of Jesus? (1) The call of God. He takes the initiative in calling a person to himself. See John 15:16. (2) The response of the person. (3) The commitment to “follow”.

Remember that **even those in authority are still under authority**. All those disciples who were not chosen were under the authority of the twelve. Among the twelve, nine of them were under the authority of Peter, James, and John (the inner circle). James and John were under the authority of Peter, and Peter was under the authority of Jesus, and even Jesus was under the authority of his heavenly Father. “I did not come to do my own will,” he declared, “but the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38).

Every Christian has to be under authority . . .

(4) We learn from this story the importance of diversity within unity.

Consider the contrasts between Matthew, a tax collector and Roman collaborator, and Simon the Zealot, sworn enemy of Rome and armed insurrectionist . . .

Yet, what did they embrace in common that bonded them together?

(5) Finally, we learn from this story how God sovereignly and secretly turns evil for good, how he takes pain and makes it serve his glorious purpose.

The last man on the list of apostles is named **Judas Iscariot**. For heaven’s sake, *why did Jesus choose him?* Some of you may be tempted to say, “Well, it’s obvious that he had no idea that Judas would betray him in such a way that would lead to his death.” Oh really?

Do you remember what Jesus said at the last supper in the upper room, on the night before his betrayal? He told his disciples that not all of them were clean, “for he knew who was to betray him” (John 13:11a). Then he said, “I am not speaking of all of you; **I know whom I have chosen**. But the Scriptures will be fulfilled, ‘He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me’” (John 13:18).

Jesus’ choosing of Judas was not a mistake. It was part of God’s sovereign plan that would result in the most spectacular sin of all: the crucifixion of the only righteous person who ever lived. **Yet in the commission of that evil, evil itself is overcome!**

Here I point out *how God can take what may appear to be a colossal mistake from a human point of view and turn it for great and glorious good*. That doesn’t make the sin that is committed any less sinful. It simply glorifies and magnifies the marvelous and unfathomable providence of our sovereign God in achieving his purposes.

Romans 8:28 in the life of Jesus, his disciples, and you . . .