

The Gospel According to Luke
November 4, 2018
Reading: Mark 3:13-19

Sermon #21
Luke 6:12-16
(Mt. 10:1-4 & Mk. 3:13-19)

Ordinary Men, Extraordinary Calling: Part II

Twelve Ordinary Men

It has been a few weeks since we started our passage in Luke chapter 6 verses 12 to 16. It began with ¹²“In these days ~~he~~ *Jesus* went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. ¹³ And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles.” Jesus spent the night in protracted prayer. The choosing of the 12 was critical to God’s plan of redemption for the world. Who were these 12? Part 2 of this sermon series quickly examines the 12, but spends the majority of our time on how God works through ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things.

The lists of the 12 in Scripture always begins with Simon and Jesus would rename him Peter, the rock on which the Church of Christ was birthed. It was Simon’s brother Andrew who led him to Christ. Simon Peter became the cornerstone of the 12 while Andrew who was known by his Greek name remained in the background. Little is known about Andrew other than Simon Peter and Andrew were fishermen.

James the brother of John and the son of Zebedee and did not write the book of the Bible bearing the name of James. Like several others he was known by his Greek name taken form of the Hebrew Jacob. We know little of James. We do know that he was with his brother John after the resurrection. John is 2nd in prominence to Peter among the 12. James and John were also fishermen and known as “sons of thunder” a title given them by Jesus and they began their

spiritual walk as disciples of John the Baptist. Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John make up the 1st set of 3 groups of 4 of the 12 Apostles.

The 2nd set of 4 Apostles always begins with Philip, whose name is Greek. He was from Bethsaida the same village as Simon Peter and Andrew. It was Philip who brought Nathanael to Jesus. Philip is present at many of the important events surrounding Jesus in the Bible, but mostly in the background. Bartholomew always appears in the lists of the 12 with Philip. There is evidence between the 1st and 4th gospels that Bartholomew and Nathanael may be the same person who Philip introduced to Jesus. Matthew is Hebrew meaning “gift of Yahweh” and is a name that does not appear in the Old Testament and is introduced in the 1st gospel account and attributed to him as the author. Mark and Luke refer to Matthew as Levi the tax collector. As Jesus passed Matthew he commanded him to “follow me” and immediately Matthew rose and left everything to follow Jesus. Besides his gospel account Matthew is best known for throwing a party in his home for Jesus that greatly offended the Jewish leaders. Thomas is also known by the name Didymus (**did·oo·mos**) in the 4th gospel account written by John. It was Thomas who said to Jesus “[let us also go, that we may die with him](#)” in John 11:16 when Jesus was resolved to go and heal Lazarus against the warning of the other disciples because the Jewish leaders wanted to stone Jesus. In his statement Thomas showed his pessimism about the cost of following Jesus but also his loyalty. Of course, he is best remembered for doubting that the other disciples had seen the resurrected Jesus and thus received the nickname of “Doubting Thomas.”

James “[the son of Alphaeus](#)” (**al·fah·yos**) always leads the 3rd group of 4 apostles. The only time James is mentioned in the New Testament is in the lists of the apostles. Since Matthew is also referred to as “[the son of Alphaeus](#)” James may be his brother, but this is not certain. “[Simon who was called the Zealot](#)” or

Simon the Cananaean in Matthew (Mt. 10:4 ASV) is the most obscure among the apostles of Jesus. Little is known about him. Judas the son of James may have also been known by the name Thaddaeus as mentioned in Matthew 10 and Mark 3. Judas is only recorded in his question to Jesus, “[Judas \(not Iscariot\) said to him Jesus, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?”](#)” (John 14:22) He is only slightly less obscure than Simon the Zealot. The final member of the 12 is “[Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.](#)” This Judas was the only Judean among the 12. Judas was the treasurer of the group of 12 and was concerned with money. He was upset when Mary anointed Jesus with costly oil instead of selling the oil. So mad was Judas that he left Jesus and Mary and went to the chief priests to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Jesus had to be betrayed in order to fulfill God’s plan of redemption and through a night of prayer Jesus chose Judas knowing his heart and that he would be the betrayer.

We know a fair amount about few of the Twelve and very little about others. I have chosen not to go into great detail of each of the Apostles’ lives in this message, I would encourage you to read about these men who were ordinary and lived extraordinary. What I wanted to focus on is how God uses the ordinary to accomplish his extraordinary.

Ordinary People

There was a time when formal education was not the norm for most people and it was not as important as it is today and apprenticeships were more common. There were people who became great in the world’s view by their efforts and accomplishments. My dad had a high school diploma and after he was released from the Navy following World War II and the Korean War he began as a laborer for a company. Through hard work and performance he advanced to the position

of superintendent of a company with about 4000 employees. In fact he was the company's first superintendent without a college degree. There were only 3 vice-presidents and the president above him. He was told he would spend the rest of his career as a superintendent because without a college degree he could not be advanced to the position of vice-president. This frustrated my father, who felt his experience of working from laborer to the position of superintendent gave him more experience and practical education than the men over him who were in their positions largely due to college degrees and most lacked experience of how the company did its work out in the field and they only knew numbers; numbers of employees, equipment and costs. However, if this is not the condition of the whole world it is certainly the status of America. Before I left the corporate world the company I was with did not allow anyone into management without a college degree and to be honest it was not always important what the degree was in. My bachelor degree is in Art as my major and Political Science as my minor with a teaching certification and I managed an insurance and investment office that did about 1.3 million in new business per month.

We have people in our congregation who needed a college degree to qualify for their positions as Teachers, Engineers, Financial Officers, Nurses and Managers. However, even in jobs that one refers to, as the "Trades" these also require training and qualifications. Here at Canyon Bible we have those who have had training to be mechanics, retail, construction, food service and others. More specialized training has become needed because of how complicated our society has become and its demands on people. This has led churches also train. Churches require pre-marriage classes that include how to relate and communicate as husband and wife, how to develop a budget and manage accounts, what does it mean to be a parent and critical for all of us where is one's maturity level in their

spiritual life and relationship with Christ. Through training the possibility of doing one's job well or having a successful marriage increases.

However, God's standards are not the world's standards of performance. Paul instructed Timothy in the qualities God wants in an overseer or elder or pastor. "The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. ²Therefore an overseer must be **above reproach**, the **husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach**, ³ **not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money**. ⁴He must **manage his own household well**, with all dignity **keeping his children submissive**, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶He must **not be a recent convert**, or he may become puffed up with **conceit** and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷Moreover, he must be **well thought of by outsiders**, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil." (1 Timothy 3:1-7) God does not look for technical skills, but at the whole of the person. When I was in business everything was judged on performance and profitability. Many of my counterparts were actively unfaithful to their spouses, did morally offensive things and as long as one did not outright break the law – whatever business practices were used were OK if they generated profit. Morals often got in the way of profits. Oh, how the standards of God are different from the worlds! God takes the ordinary and equips them to be servants of his kingdom.

God Makes The Ordinary Extraordinary

What makes God's standards possible is the change when one is indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. The qualities of leadership found in 1 Timothy chapter 3 is not just limited to elders and deacons – these are the standards for all believers.

As Marty shared last week one needs both the knowledge of the Scripture and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for balance – not to become legalistic or be an emotional Christian without the foundation of Scripture. Spiritual balance enables one to live daily by walking in the Spirit of God. You see to be Christian is a noble task built upon both the Scriptures and a relationship with God and to be empowered by the Living God’s Spirit. In fact, God the Son, Jesus, says God’s children and his spiritual brothers and sisters “**therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**” (Matthew 5:48) Wow! That is a tall order to fill.

Where the Twelve perfect? No, they were sinners like you and me and one would even betray Jesus. I can say the Apostles were like you and I in that they were ordinary men that God called and through Christ’s teachings and the power of the Holy Spirit and they did extraordinary things. Jesus said the goal was to “**be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**” Because all humans are born into sin this is an impossible goal. So, God by his grace chooses unworthy and unqualified people to minister to his creation, the people of the world, for him. By God’s sanctifying grace, God the Spirit indwelling people he changes them into useful servants. Jesus by his atoning death and his resurrection brings believers beyond being useful servants.

I am reading from The Gospel According to John in chapter 15 beginning in verse 12. Jesus spoke these words to the Twelve. It is a command that they struggled to fulfill. Jesus commanded that these words be recorded because they are true for all believers, for all generations, for us this morning. Jesus says in verse 12, “**This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**” My dear beloved this is not a suggestion, but a command from Christ. He loved those he walked with and taught; with the same depth he loves us. God the Father and God the Son loves broken and sinful but redeemed believers in spite of

their failings and sin. Jesus commands that we are to love each other even when we fail each other. The Apostles failed God and each other, but God loved them, brought them to repentance before himself and before each other, he changed them and used them to change the world. Continuing in verse 13, “**Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.**” Jesus is God and yet he calls us his friends and proved his unconditional love for those he calls his friends by sacrificing himself for their eternal salvation. This is the model, the example our Lord gave the Apostles and he gives you and me. The Apostles, with the exception of John, were martyred for the Church of Christ. This is what it means to be a friend of Jesus and of each other – the willingness to die for each other. This is not a hard concept for a husband; most will give their lives to save their wife. It is not a hard concept for a parent; most will give their lives to save their children. Now look at your brothers and sisters in this room, would you give your life for the cause of Christ and to save your brothers and sisters in Christ? This is the price the 12 paid that we can have the church today. Are you willing to pay the price that others may have the church in the future?

Jesus continues by defining what it means to be his friends, ¹⁴“**You are my friends if you do what I command you.** ¹⁵**No longer do I call you ~~servants~~ slaves, for the ~~servant~~ slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.**” So, to be the friend of Christ one must live out his commands which are found only in the Bible and especially the New Testament. The is why at Canyon Bible we teach that believing in Christ is a complete lifestyle based on our salvation by God’s grace alone, through Jesus the Christ whose death atoned for our sins and by the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit that empowers a believer to take the Scriptures not only into their mind, but into their heart and soul as well. It was over these

things that the Apostles found themselves in conflict at times with God and with each other and through the debate, prayer, the changing of hearts, submitting to the Spirit and repentance they came out the other side as both true friends of Christ and of each other.

We all sin and fall short and then through the Scripture given by God and the Spirit of God we are conflicted, convicted, repent and are conformed. However, when one openly defies God's Scripture then they show disrespect for God and that one does not believe in the God of the Bible but in some man-made god of their own choosing. It is easy to say look at the Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses and Islam, but what about the many denominations that have chosen to adjust or change the commands of Jesus he calls believers to obey? They change the meaning of God's Word in order to meet whatever social needs they perceive and so they can view their sin as not sin. What they have done is claim salvation through Christ and yet they are disobedient to his commands and believe in a perverted god just as the Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses. Therefore, they are not friends of Jesus, which means they are not saved because they in truth do not believe in God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit of the Bible as God inspired it. Could Jesus have been any clearer than when he said, **"You are my friends if you do what I command you"** or as his words recorded earlier in the Book of John, **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."** (John 14:6) What it means to be Christian and to live faithfully as a Christian is not a great mystery but simple. Obedience or disobedience to God's Word is what separates the remnant Church from the broad church that has become just as lost as the Jewish religion of Jesus' day and there are many churches today without a heart to teach and live as Jesus commands. We, my beloved, must make a conscience decision to be faithful, live faithful - for

to be Jesus' friend is a complete surrender to him and to live a lifestyle that is foreign to this world. This is what the ordinary men did who were called to be Apostles of God.

God takes the ordinary people and uses them for extraordinary purposes in fulfilling his plan of redemption and will continue to do so until the end of human history. Jesus makes clear how we were saved. Reading at verse 16 of John chapter 15, **“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”** Jesus chose the 12 and we were incapable of choosing God because our souls were spiritually dead. It was God through his grace that reached out chose us and he regenerated your soul and gave you spiritual life. Why would God reach out to you, to me who are unworthy sinners? Verse 16 says, **“I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.”** All believers are to model their lives after Christ, just as the Apostles did. We are to live in such a way that we bear fruit for the kingdom of God and it will be lasting fruit, eternal fruit. When the Apostles and when you and I surrender our lives to Christ the result will be **“whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.”** When we have surrendered to Christ what our hearts desires is what Christ desires and this is what we will ask for in our prayers.

Christ says it is through obedience to God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit that we are changed from people with hearts of stone to people with a spiritual heart of flesh – the flesh of Christ. We remain sinners, but with a heart that seeks to please God, desires God, loves God and it becomes our desire to live as His light to the world. It is this transforming thought process and lifestyle where Christ says, ¹⁷ **“These things I command you”** – and when we obey his

commands it enables us to do the impossible - “so that you will love one another.” (John 15:12-17) This is exactly the same path or process the Twelve Apostles journeyed.

Jesus did not quit calling people into his service with the 12. He has continued and will continue until his return. Paul was not one of the original 12 and yet Christ called him and used him to accomplish great things for the kingdom. Paul was the only Apostle that would be considered highly educated – the rest were ordinary men. Christ continues to call people into his service, he called John Wesley, John Newton, Fanny Cosby, Martin Luther, Corrie Ten Boom, Charles Surgeon, Jim Elliott to name just a few and countless others over the last 2000 years. Be inspired by reading about the Apostles and these great men and women of God who were ordinary and did extraordinary things. What the Apostles, and these great men and women of church history have in common is that they surrendered themselves to Christ living in obedience to his commands, to the Word of God, relying greatly on the Holy Spirit and they were concerned with the salvation of others and the future of Christ’s church. Paul wrote, “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:3-4) God equips ordinary people who humble themselves through the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish extraordinary things for the kingdom of God and he gives believers a great love for others.

Is education important? Yes, for we need to understand what we believe and why we believe in order to live the gospel of Christ and share it with those who do not know him. With the foundation of God’s Word and surrendering to the direction of the Holy Spirit we individually and as families and as a church will be able to fulfill the command of Christ as ordinary people living extraordinary lives

for God's kingdom. We will live fully committed to believe and live for, "The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰ 'And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30-31) Amen and Amen!

I pray God will use each of us for his glory. I pray we will be able to set aside our pride and egocentric minds to live with abandonment for the kingdom of God. Living with love for others with the heart of spiritual flesh God has given each believer. Amen!