**Jesus Chooses the Twelve Apostles**

June 22, 2014

Luke 6:12-26

Key verse 6:13 “When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.”

Have you ever been chosen to do something? I am sure all of you could say, “Yes.” But if I ask you how you felt when you were chosen, you might all have different reactions based upon what you were chosen for. These reactions might be one of excitement, surprise, avoidance or indifference. But how would you feel if you knew that you were chosen by God himself? How would you feel about God? What difference would it make in your day to day life that God chose you? In today’s message, Jesus chose twelve regular and ordinary men out of hundreds who followed him to be his apostles. Jesus’ choosing of these twelve men is the most significant landmark in New Testament history. This is because Jesus chose these twelve men to be the future leaders of the early church. These men changed the course of human history by bringing the message of Jesus’ death and resurrection to the whole world. Even today, yes even today, all over the world, Jesus Christ is still calling and choosing men and women, like us, to be his apostles.

I. Jesus Spent the Whole Night Praying to God (12)

Look at verse 12. “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.” Wow! Is this a typographical error! Does it say that Jesus spent the night praying to God? Yes! This is what it says. He spent the whole night in prayer to God. Have you ever tried to do this? I could not do it because I am not a night person. But I guess I couldn’t do it because I did not have such a pressing problem in my heart like Jesus did. What exactly was the pressing problem in Jesus’ heart at this time? It was the growing opposition of his message and actions by the religious leaders--that is, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Whenever Jesus said something or did something to reveal God’s love and the reason why he came, they became critical, judgmental and felt that their authority was being threatened. When he told a paralyzed man that his sins were forgiven, they thought to themselves, “This is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” When he healed a man with a shriveled hand on the Sabbath, they were furious and began to plot how they might kill Jesus.

What can one do when everyone seems to be against you and despises you and wants to do harm to you, even though everything you did was out of love? It is easy to give up because it is too much trouble to go on, too much sacrifice, too much heart-ache, too much pain and anguish. It is easier to go and take your frustrations out playing play station or escaping from your problems by watching many movies and eating a lot in a dark room. But Jesus did not give up. Instead, as we see in verse 12, he prayed to God. His prayer did not stop after 10 minutes or one hour or two hours. It went through the whole night. As he prayed, he poured out his heart to God. As he prayed, he trusted that God, his Heavenly Father knew how to help and had the best answers and solutions.

When we are faced with an important decision, what should we do? What is the best major for me to study in college? What should I do with my life? We don’t know what to do. But God knows the best answer and solution. So going to the Lord in prayer is what Jesus shows us. If he prayed, so should we. Then God will lead us and guide us. He will direct our paths of life. When we learn to pray like Jesus, then he will turn our darkness into light. We see that as Jesus spent the night praying to God, the darkness started to change into light as the sun rose above the horizon. When morning came, he was ready to choose the twelve. This was God’s answer to him in prayer.

II. The Twelve Apostles (13-16)

Look at verse 13. “When morning came, he called his disciples to him and he chose twelve of them whom he also designated apostles.” The key words here are “called” and “chosen.” Jesus had many disciples who followed him, more than 500 men (1 Cor 15:6) and also women (Lk.8:2). However, he needed to call and choose some to be the leaders and so he could be with them more personally and trained them to be future leaders. So he called and chose twelve. This calling and choosing of these men was an act of God’s grace. None of these men had any outstanding character about them. There were no class valedictorians, no star athletes, no Ph.D. professors or star actors and performers. None of them went to the seminary. They all had their weaknesses, mistakes and short comings. For example, Peter was such an impulsive person that he often put his foot in his mouth. None of them could boast that they had chosen Jesus and were worthy to be his disciples. There was no interview process either for these twelve, nor was there an elimination procedure like there is during Canadian Idol.

Jesus’ calling and choosing is God’s divine grace. Jesus said in John 15:16, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last.” Why then did Jesus choose these twelve men? It was for the purpose of world salvation. Look at verse 13 again, “When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.” Jesus chose these men and then designated them as apostles. “Apostle” literally means “one sent out.” The word apostle is similar to the word “missionary” in our time. Soon Jesus would send them out two by two and give them power and authority to drive out demons and to cure diseases and heal the sick. They would go out with the message, “The kingdom of God is near, repent and believe the good news!” (Lk.9:1-6). By their words and actions, and lifestyle, that is, their influence, they would bring the message of the gospel to a world lost in sin. Wow! How great God is to entrust this important mission to them! How great God is that he gave this mission to such ordinary men!

God has a divine purpose to use those whom he has called and chosen to bring salvation. We also are included in this purpose. When we believed in Jesus and were saved, it shows that we were called by God and chosen by God. This is the reason why he saves us. When I realized that God had chosen me like he did with his disciples, I felt greatly valued by God and loved by God. I felt important and special. I found true meaning of my life. In the past I felt worthless when I compared myself with Einstein. But now I see that God could use me to help students to know Jesus and have eternal life. Because Jesus still calls and chooses today, even 2000 years after the event, we who believe can live daily with a clear purpose. We can influence people’s lives, one person at a time, whether at work or school. I can only thank Jesus who called me and chose me to be an apostle to bring the gospel to many students in this generation. Each one of us who believe have been called and chosen by Jesus. When we accept this wonderful grace and purpose that he has for our lives, then we will become such a great blessing to many in this generation.

What were the names of the twelve men whom Jesus called and chose? Their names are mentioned in verses 14-16, “Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas, son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”

They were a diverse group much like we are. Why did Jesus pick such a diverse group? It is because the world is full of diverse people. Each one of Jesus’ apostles could understand people who were like them. For example, Thomas was a philosophy major, and a skeptic. He was always saying, “Prove it! Unless I see it I will not believe!” He would become a shepherd to those who doubt and he would be very patient with them, considering how long it took him to believe. Matthew was a business and economics major who later became a tax collector. He was chosen by Jesus to shepherd business people and tax collectors who had been hurt and wounded by their sin of greed. Simon the Zealot was a politics major who minored in terrorism. He was very opinionated about the Roman government and organized suicide bombings. But Jesus chose him to shepherd the crowds of angry and protesting people, so that they could look forward to the righteous and just reign of Jesus (Isa.9:6-7). We imagine that Simon the Zealot became the most gentle disciple of Jesus. These twelve men were not the top twelve in Israel, but Jesus loved them and had God’s great hope for them.

And again, we cannot ignore how God used them and how they have influenced our society. Their names are still being used: Thomas, Philip, Andrew—Andrew Chriostpher, Peter—Peter Cho, Bartholomew—Bart Simpson, James—James Oh, Simon—Simon Cowell of American Idol, John—John Lee, Matthew. No one names their son after Judas Iscariot the traitor. This is the only one. But Judas Iscariot the traitor is mentioned to show the great patience and grace of Jesus who really loved Judas to the end even though Jesus knew that Judas would betray him all along! This shows the depth of God’s love for those whom he calls. (Jn.6:70-71, Jn.13:18-30)

III. Blessings and Woes (17-26)

After choosing the twelve and designating them apostles, Jesus went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all. Jesus’ earthly messianic ministry had attracted many disciples and a large crowd of people, both Jew and Gentile, who had pressing problems and urgent needs. Jesus met their needs. But his focus was to train his newly appointed disciples.

In verses 20-23 Jesus teaches the blessed life of his disciples. Look at verse 20. “Looking at his disciples, he said: ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.’” Jesus’ disciples were poor. They had left everything and given up their full-time jobs to follow Jesus. But Jesus did not promise them any pay, not even lunch money. Instead, he called them “blessed” in their time of poverty. It was because they learned from Jesus a “manger” lifestyle. They lived poorly, not because they could not get proper jobs, but because they followed Jesus as their first priority. From the beginning, their motive must be purely to learn from Jesus. From the beginning, they must depend on God for material things. But they are indeed blessed, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Look at verse 21. “Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.” Jesus’ disciples would have to endure times of hunger. Their lifestyle was not like that of worldly people who work hard to eat three meals a day. Jesus’ disciples lived for their mission. Sometimes they had to miss meals. But they would learn to eat the Bread of Life that satisfies both body and soul. And finally they would enjoy the great banquet in the kingdom of God forever. Jesus’ disciples would weep. Sometimes it was because they missed their moms. Sometimes it was because they struggled so hard to bear with one another. Mostly it was because of their own sins. But all their sorrows would turn to joy and they would laugh with loud voices from their hearts.

Look at verses 22-23. “Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.” Jesus was hated and rejected by the evil men. His disciples would share in his persecution. But in the time of persecution, they must not feel sorry for themselves. It was the time to rejoice because they glorified God and gained a great reward in heaven. Here we learn that Jesus’ disciples must have a basic attitude to endure all kinds of sufferings for the glory of God and for the sake of learning Jesus. Their ultimate reward is not in this world, but in the kingdom of God.

In verses 24-26, Jesus teaches his disciples about woes. Look at these verses. “But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.” Jesus warned his disciples that a life spent in pleasure and comfort on earth, though praised by men, would lead to woe in the end.

To be called by Jesus and chosen by Jesus is God’s sign that he loves us and values us and that we are important to him. Even if we have not been chosen by others, and have been rejected and ignored, we should know that God Almighty has his eye on us and has chosen us for an incredibly great and wonderful purpose. That purpose will bring many lost and suffering people to the kingdom of God and will give us eternal treasures in heaven. Let’s accept Jesus’ calling personally.