

Twelve Ordinary Men and One Extraordinary Saviour

Mark 3:13-19

May 5, 2024 Pastor Jeremy Cagle

Well, Richard grabbed me a moment ago and said, “Hey, I forgot to pray for the mothers. I prayed for everything else but forgot to pray for the moms.” So why don't we do that here before the sermon? So let's go to the Lord in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, we are so blessed to set aside a Sunday, to remember our mothers. Lord, it's a gift to have parents, but it's especially a gift to have ones who love you, and who have trained us up in the Word of God, and have prioritized the gospel in our lives and have taught it in our homes and have trained us up in the way that we should go. And so Lord, if there's any here this morning, and I know there's many who have had godly moms, Lord, I pray that they would, first of all, thank You for that, that is a gift. And not everyone has that gift. And so Lord, we rejoice in that for those who are moms with little kids, even now, or maybe older kids, and they're just fighting the battle of the day by day of just everything from laundry, to preparing meals, to just organizing the home, serving their husbands, all the things they have to do. Lord, I pray You would give them strength. Give them grace, Lord, that they would honour You in that and that they would not be anxious about the day by day, but trust that You are a God who is sovereign over motherhood, and you're a God who is sovereign over this role that You have put them in. And would Christ be glorified in the homes that are present in this church. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.

Well, after that prayer, I do want to make a disclaimer that this is not going to be a Mother's Day sermon, just so you know. Not that there's not a good time for that sort of thing. If you would take your Bible and turn to the Gospel of Mark, that's the book we're in this morning. But we're going to be continuing our studies in the gospel of Mark. I want to thank Quentin for preaching for us last week; I lost my voice, and he graciously went back through some wonderful lessons on the man with a withered hand. But today, we want to look at the next story in this gospel.

And as you're turning there, let me just tell you this story. In one of the libraries of ancient Europe, archaeologists have found the fictional account, not a true account, a legendary account of the time when Jesus ascended into heaven after His time on Earth. And when He got there, an angel asked Him the question, “Did the whole earth believe in You?” Jesus said, “No, not yet.” So the angel said, “Well, what are you gonna do about it?” And Christ said, “Well, I left twelve men to take care of it.” And the angel thought about that a minute, and he said, “Twelve? What do you mean? Twelve? Is that enough? What if they fail? Shouldn't there be more?” Question after question after question, and Jesus said these words, He said, “Calm down, they won't fail because My grace is sufficient for them.” And I tell you that story because that's what our text is about today.

If you look in Mark chapter 3:16, it tells about the time when Jesus chose His disciples. And I'm not going to read all their names because we're gonna go through them in a moment, but how many did He pick? 12. Right. Were there more? No, because they would not fail. He picked so few because He knew they would succeed because if you look in your Bibles, verse 14, says they were with Him. In other words, the reason the Lord put so much confidence in these dozen men is because He trained them up for the ministry and He knew that would be enough. It wasn't because of their power. They didn't have any. And it wasn't because of their resources or wisdom or anything like that. They were pretty lacking in those departments. It happened simply because He prepared them. And we know that Christ does all things well. Amen?

I mean, the disciples, you guys know, they were normal people, right? There wasn't anything special about them. There's no celebrities and the list, no movers and shakers in the kingdom of Israel. Instead, they were just ordinary souls serving an extraordinary Saviour, just like you and me. Is anybody special in here today? No. When you look around the room, do you see any movers and shakers, celebrities in the town of Chilliwack? No. What you see is found in the words of 1 Corinthians 1.

For consider your calling, brothers *and sisters*, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.

That's what the disciples were. They were the foolish things of the world. I mean, make no mistake when you go through this list if you just look at it in your Bibles. I mean, there's fishermen in the passage and tax collectors. There's zealots along with patriots, the word zealot, you could put the word terrorist beside it. There were hard men, gentle men, passive, aggressive, mean spirited, sweet spirit, and everything in between. These guys just run the gamut of the human experience, but the one thing that brought them together was the Lord Jesus Christ. It wasn't politics; they didn't agree on politics. And it wasn't culture; they didn't all have the same culture. I mean, they were Jews, and there as some common ground, but there were some big differences. But Christ and Christ alone united them. It's the same way in the church. Friends, I don't have to tell you, we don't all agree on politics this morning, you know that we don't all agree on culture. I don't think you could find any five people that would agree on culture in Chilliwack, British Columbia. There's about a million cultures represented in this town. But that's okay. Christ is the one who calls us. Christ as the one who draws us. Christ is the one who gets the glory for what happens in the body of Christ.

And that's what we're going to talk about this morning by looking at two things Mark tells us about the calling of the disciples. So if you're taking notes, this is our outline for today. But in Mark 3:13-19, we're going to look at two things Mark tells us about the calling of the disciples.

The first one is that they were called to do something. The first thing Mark tells us about the calling of these men is that they were called to do something, which means Jesus set them aside for a specific task.

And before we get into that, in verse 13, let me just remind you that we're calling this series, the Gospel of the Servant King because a key verse in the Gospel of Mark is Mark 10:45, which says, "For the Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve." And that's what the book is about. When you read the gospel of Mark, you're reading how Jesus came to serve, and serve and serve people. Things that we've talked about so far: In mark 1 He serves a man with a demon, somebody most of us would stay away from. Then in the same chapter, He serves the people of Capernaum. Then He serves a leper, another person that most of us would stay away from. Then He serves a paralytic. Then He serves Matthew, the tax collector. Then He serves a man with a withered hand. And that's just the pace of the book. It's just one act of helping after another.

And that's what makes this passage interesting in verse 13 of chapter three because now it tells you that right in the midst of that, all this service and work and help, Jesus goes on the mountain to be alone. And to be honest, the Bible does not tell you what mountain he goes to. But it really doesn't matter because the only thing you need to know is what He did while He was there, and that is that He prayed. The Gospel of Mark doesn't tell you this, but if you want to write this verse down Luke 6:12 says that it was at this time Jesus went off to the mountain to pray. And He spent the whole night in prayer. Which means that He didn't pray a little bit when He was up there. He prayed a lot from sundown to sunup. He spent the whole time pouring out His heart to God because Mark tells us now in the gospel here, that He's going to appoint the disciples. That's why He was calling on the Lord. That's why He was pouring out His heart to Him because He was going to ordain the men who would follow Him in the gospel ministry.

That the word "appoint" in your Bibles here, it also means ordained depending on what translation you have. It's a strange one for some of us because a lot of churches don't do this anymore. But in previous years before a man was allowed to preach, he would be ordained by a body of elders. When it came to Grace Fellowship Church, one of the things they did at Grace Advance, they ordained me in California. Some of you men were there for that. And then when we brought on our elders, we ordained them as well and we put them through a series of tests to see if they were ready for the task. And that's what this is talking about because even though it does not say here that Jesus tested these men on the mountain, it does say that He sets them aside for three reasons.

And you can follow along in your text, but the first is to be with Him. You see that phrase there? That means He called these men on the mountain so they could be close to Him and watch Him and see what He does. Because from this point onwards, the two of them are going to be like this, to the point that wherever Jesus went, the disciples went. Wherever the disciples were, Christ was leading them. I think we all understand how important it is to see what a man is like behind closed doors; you want to see if his life is the same out of the pulpit as it is in the pulpit. And that's what Christ was letting these men do. They ate with Him, they slept nearby, they walked with Him, they saw how He handled conflict, everything, public and private.

It also says that He appointed them so He could send them out to preach. That was going to be their job as well. They're not gonna be fishermen anymore, they're not going to be tax collectors anymore. Now they're going to teach people the Word of God. Talk about a career change. In the ancient world, at this time, the Jews had a few ways they could hear the Word of God on a regular basis. They could do it in the temple, you could hear the word preached in the synagogue. Or you could listen to itinerant ministers who would journey from one place to another giving sermons. And they would do it in the fields and hills and meadows, and they would preach out in the street by the streams and lakes and rivers. And that's the idea here. And starting from this point forward, these apostles are going to take on that role. It's not easy to preach with notes; it's hard to preach without them. And they're not going to have any notes. They weren't going to carry a scroll of Isaiah with them out into the middle of a field; they were just going to do it with the power of the Holy Spirit.

And that brings us to another thing that He appoints them for in verse 15 and that is to cast out demons. Which means the disciples are going to go up to those who are possessed by evil spirits and drive them out like Jesus did. And that takes it all I think, to another level. It is one thing to preach, it's another thing to do miracles; they're going to do both.

Because when you read this passage, there's really one thing that comes to mind here, and that's power, right? That's what Jesus is giving the disciples. And that's a supernatural strength, unlike anything the world had ever seen before. Because the prophets of old preached, but they didn't cast out demons. I looked it up. I could not find a time when Elijah and Elijah did that, even though they did some amazing things. Neither did the judges, men like Gideon, or Samson. Samson had some crazy miracles in the Bible, not like this. The kings did not do this, men like David Solomon. The saints before the flood did not do this. But the disciples did in order to show they're going to be different.

And as I say that, let me just ask you a question to kind of point this out to draw this out a little bit. Why were there twelve disciples? You ever wondered that before? Why weren't there thirteen of these guys or fourteen or 20? Well, the answer is because that number twelve is a symbolic number that corresponds with the twelve tribes of Israel, as if to say these men were going to represent a new version of that, like in Israel 2.0. In fact, when Judas committed suicide, they didn't keep eleven disciples, they went on and got another one. They had to have twelve. Not because God did not have any more promises for future Israel, He does. But because He wanted to let the Jews know, at this time, that the leaders had become so corrupt, He's going to set them aside and start over again with someone else. These men, the fishermen, and tax collectors, and the miracles, we're going to confirm that.

If you're wondering what the miracles have to do with all this, this is the point of the miracles, all those works of casting out demons, and preaching and teaching and healing are going to prove that the apostles were God's spokesman for a new age. Even more than that, those miracles would show the people that Jesus was the Messiah. Because as the miracles occurred, I promise you, nobody would have

looked at that and said, “I know why this is taking place. It's because of Peter. Look at him. He's so amazing.” And as they're casting out demons, nobody would have watched that and told themselves, “I know why this is going on. It's because of Thomas. He's such a swell guy.” Had nothing to do with it. The people would have known exactly who's responsible for that and that's the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything in the disciples' ministry was pointing back to Him.

As I just told you, the disciples, I mean, they're just men like the rest of us. It's really hard not to get that message when you read about them in the Bible. You name the sin, they did it. Anger, they did it. Pride, they did it. Lust, they did it. Lies, coveting, greed, cowardice, fearfulness, fear of man, they're guilty of all of that. But Jesus called them anyway. And He used them to do all of this so the glory would go to Him.

In fact, Bible scholars have determined that there's several stages when miracles occurred in Scripture. And the vast majority of them occur after this event. Miracles did not occur all the time. Even in the Old Testament, even in the New, you don't see them on every single page. There's phases and periods of them and the greatest stage is going to be right now to send the message to everyone that the Saviour is here. The Son of God is walking on the earth. And as a result, His power is being unleashed. And these men are at the forefront of that. They're going to be the tip of the spear.

When you read the gospel, sometimes you may wonder why'd they killed Jesus, it's because He scared them. Someone who did what He did, and what the disciples did was frightening because of the power.

And I'd like to say more about that, but I want to move on to the next point, to tell you who the disciples were. Which brings us to another thing Mark tells us about the calling of the twelve, and that is that they were called by name.

First, they're called to do something, and that is to preach and teach and cast out demons so they could unleash Christ's power on the land. They wouldn't just unleash it on Israel, by the way; they're gonna go other places and unleash this power. You read about that in the book of Acts. But secondly, Mark tells us that Jesus called them by name, one by one, at least they're listed one by one in the text. And this is where we're going to spend most of our time this morning.

Because if you look in the scripture here, starting in verse 16, Mark will begin to name the apostles; and as he does so he's going to put them into groups. And you can see these groups in your Bibles by the semi colons that are placed in the text. You see one after the names of Peter, James and John at the end of verse 17, at least you see that in the NASB Bible. That's the first group you discover here, that's where it kind of begins. And then you see another semicolon at the end of verse 18. That's the second group composed of Andrew through Simon the Zealot. And then last of all, you see the name Judas. He's in a category all by himself. And I'll tell you why in a minute, but before we get to all that, I think the best way to study these guys is to look at them in the groups that are laid out here. So let's do that.

Because verse 16, goes on to talk about the first disciple, when it says that Jesus appointed the twelve, and their names were Simon. And you can stop there, because the name Simon means reed or someone who was blown along by the wind. Apparently, that was not the only name this guy was known by because the verse goes on to say, Jesus gave him another one. And that is the name Peter, which means rock. And the reason Jesus did this is because apparently those two names really summed up what Simon Peter was about because sometimes he could be a rock and sometimes he could be a reed, depending on the circumstances. He could be kind of schizophrenic at times, a little fickle. MacArthur calls him the apostle with a foot shaped mouth. But he would fall asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane, and he would deny Jesus three times and try to walk on water and fail. But at other times, he would pull out his sword to defend Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane. Anybody else do that? No. And he would tell him that “You are the Christ, the son of the living God,” did anybody else say that out loud at that time? No. And he would walk on water. Anybody walked on water before? See before you pick on Peter a little bit. Nobody can raise their hand at that. That's just what he was like. He was all or nothing as far as Christ was concerned.

Which is interesting, because when you study Peter, you find he had a very stable background. Earlier in Mark 1, it tells us he was a fisherman by trade, very normal job, nine to five, Monday through Friday type work, which means he was not a recreational fisherman, but a commercial one who made a living going out at night with a big net that he would throw into the Sea of Galilee like this so that it unfolded in the air and landed flat on the surface of the water. And then as the edges sank to the bottom, he would catch whatever fish were swimming underneath that. There were weights on the perimeter of the net, causing it to sink, and so Peter or someone else in the boat could dive underneath, pull the bottom of the net closed and haul it back to shore. That's how they fished. Not easy work, hard work, can be dangerous at times, the Sea of Galilee had a lot of storms on it, but he earned his money by the sweat of his brow. When you read these men, especially starting with the first couple of ones, you could write the word blue collar in your Bible. These were not white-collar type, corporate people, they were just normal, hardworking guys.

And there's more we could say about Peter; he would be the spokesman of the apostles. That's why you read so much about him. His words are recorded more than any other one in the Bible.

But for the sake of time, we'll move on to these other two men that are mentioned in the group here and that's James and John. Because the passage goes on to tell us that

And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), James the *son of* Zebedee and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, “Sons of Thunder”).

And as you read that, tell me, how would you like that nickname? That one's pretty neat. I mean, if someone went to Peter and said, "What did Jesus call you?" He would say, "The rock." That's pretty cool. But if you went to these guys, they would say, "Sons of Thunder. Hey, Peter, huh? That's better." And the reason He did that is because these guys were a handful when they were together. I've told you before, they're like the two little boys that spend the whole week fighting and wrestling and breaking your furniture in the house. And then they come into church on Sunday and say, "Good morning, Pastor Jeremy, how are you today? I like your tie." Yeah, little rascals.

Just about any time you see them together, the thunder is rolling in the Bible. Luke 9 tells us at one time, they wanted to call down fire on some Samaritans who rejected Jesus because that was their attitude in life. "Are the Samaritans rejecting you Lord? Burn them. Are they giving you trouble? Kill them all, kill every one of them. Show no mercy." At another time, Matthew 20 tells us that their mother made a similar outlandish gesture when she comes to the Lord and asks if her sons could sit by His side in the Kingdom, and the other disciples could hear it. Think they liked that? That was her mentality. Are their seats available in the kingdom? We'll take them. Are their spots open by the throne? Give them to my boys, they deserve it. Some scholars speculate that she made that request because James and John's father was Zebedee, a fisherman who owned a boat with several servants in it, which probably means he had some money at his disposal. He was not poor. And that could explain why she thought they were better than everyone else.

But the good news is that even with all that fire behind them, these guys were sold out for Christ as well. You can see that in the fact that James would be the first one to die for the Lord and John would be the last apostle to die. Church history tells us John would live up into his 90s, long after everyone else had passed away and the whole time he would never waver in his devotion to the Lord, never turn aside. He would persevere all the way to the end, as a 90-year-old man.

Because if you could sum up the lives of this first set of disciples, you could say they were passionate. These men had a tremendous zeal for the Lord, which is really all that mattered. All Jesus wanted to know is "Do you love Me?" That's all the all He cared about is "Will you take up your cross and follow," and they did. And therefore they were examples for us to imitate.

I mention that because maybe some of you need to hear that this morning because when you read the list of disciples, you might be tempted to draw a halo over their heads. And you might say, "I can't ever be like this. I can't follow Christ like them. I've sinned, I've failed. I've denied Christ. I've fallen asleep when I shouldn't have. I've stepped out of the boat to do something amazing for the Lord and sank under the waves, so to speak. Does Jesus want anything to do with me?" And the truth is that He does if you will be passionate about Him. He just wants you to take up your cross and follow. If you stumble, that's fine. If you trip over your own two feet, that's okay. You keep following. You don't have to be perfect, but passionate.

Listen to what the apostle John said about this in one of his letters. He said that “God is love and the one who abides in love, abides in God. And the key word is the word “abide.” How do you follow Christ? You abide. How can you be His disciple? You stay with Him. Not just once, but over and over and over again, throughout your life. I mean, we have some young people here that are following the Lord. Praise God for that. But young people let me tell you something. I'm not just interested if you follow Christ in your 20s, you need to follow Christ in your 70s, 80s, and 90s as well. And it's hard to do in your 20s. Let's not downplay that. But it's hard to do it as a crotchety old person too, amen? It's not easy. But that's what we want. That's what these men were like.

In fact, if you want an example of this, when they failed, they just went back to Christ. And a good example is you can read about the time Jesus appeared to Peter after he denied Him three times. And what did Peter do? He went right back to Christ. In fact, He swam back to Christ because he saw Jesus on the shore, he was in a boat, and he just jumps out of the boat to go after him. He didn't even wait for the boat to get back to shore, it was taking too long. We all need to learn a lesson from that.

By the way, these three men are mentioned together in this text because they would be the inner circle that Jesus took with them everywhere that He went, or a lot of places that He went. While the other disciples would follow Christ, Peter, James, and John would have the privilege of doing it in the Garden of Gethsemane and the Mount of Transfiguration. They would see Him raise a little girl from the dead when no one else got to witness that. And that makes them stand out.

And it brings us to another group of disciples, Jesus calls by name here, and that is the group of Andrew through Simon the Zealot. You could refer to them as the general apostles, the first three men are the inner apostles or inner disciples. And these are the guys next that are given general access to Christ as apostles. Not as much as the other guys, although they did follow Him a lot.

Let's go through some of them here. The list goes on to say, “Andrew,” after the first semi colon. That was Simon Peter's brother. There's actually two sets of brothers in the passage; you have James and John, and you have Peter and Andrew. Which is interesting, because if Peter was the loudmouth brother in the group, Andrew was the quiet one. Anybody have a brother like that? Loudmouth or quiet. We all do. You don't hear him say all that much in the Bible, but when he did talk, it was worth listening to because Andrew love to bring people to Jesus. That's what he's known for. He was constantly taking them by the hand and leading them to the Saviour.

The first time you see him in the Gospel of John is in John 1, when John the Baptist points to Jesus, and says, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” And what's one of the first things Andrew does, he goes home and gets Peter, brings him to Christ. That's his mode of operation. He does the same thing again in John 6 when Jesus feeds the 5,000 because it was Andrew who brought the little boy to Jesus with the fish and the loaves. He does the same thing again in John 12 when some Greeks or Gentiles want to meet Jesus. It's Andrew along with Philip who takes them to the Lord, which was unheard of at the time because

they're Greeks and Gentiles and you're not supposed to do that in Israel. They're outcasts. But Andrew does it because that's where his heart's at. He was gifted in the work of one-on-one evangelism. He's a good reminder that if you don't have Peter's personality, that's okay. God can still use you. And if you're not an extrovert, outspoken type of person, that's all right. You can do what Andrew did and you can lead someone to Christ behind the scenes.

One thing I've learned in the years of ministry is that some of the greatest evangelists do their best work behind the scenes because they know that a lot of people don't come to Christ after hearing a sermon, but they will do it under the influence of a personal connection with someone. That's where Andrew excelled. He's the follow up guy. You guys know the follow up guy on the elder board or the deacon team. You know, the pastor preaches a sermon, or someone gives a message, but he follows up to ask people, "What do you think about that? How did it connect with you in here?" That's Andrew.

Brings it to another disciple mentioned in verse 18 and that is Phillip. Just one word, Phillip. Mark doesn't give you more details here because he doesn't have to. The one word says it all, Phillip is a Greek name. It's not Jewish. And that doesn't mean Philip was a Greek. He's not. They're all Jews here, but it tells you that he was a Jew that had embraced a Greek culture. The technical term is a Hellenistic Jew. Greek civilization has spread far and wide at this time in the first century after Alexander the Great took over the world. And as a result, a lot of Jews in Israel had begun to adopt their way of living. So they talked like Greeks, and they walked like Greeks, and they named their children Greek names. And that's what you're seeing here. Apparently, Phillip's parents did that for him.

And as you can imagine, it really impacted the kind of person he would turn out to be. That story in John 12, I just told you about gives you insight into Philip's personality, because it says, When the Greeks wanted to see Jesus, they came to Philip first. Why? Because they felt like he could relate to them. He acted like Greek people did, or at least he had a Greek name. And so Philip's life shows you God uses your background for His purposes. He used Philip to reach the Greeks because in many ways he was a Greek at heart, just like He uses many of you to reach Canadians because you're Canadian at heart. Or He uses others to reach Dutch people because you're Dutch at heart. Or He uses others to reach South Africans or Americans because that's where you're from, you talk like Americans, walk like Americans, and you watch baseball this time of year. That's what this man's story is about.

Philip would grow up in Israel, he would learn all that Greek, become a disciple, and as the church would grow and spread out into the surrounding regions, he would be one of the people who would pave the way for it to flourish as it went past the borders of Palestine. The New Testament is in what language? It's not Hebrew; it's in Greek. He would be instrumental in that sort of thing.

With that said, let me give you another apostle here. That's Thomas. I'm going to skip around a little bit, but we can't get to everyone. But Mark tells us Jesus called Andrew, and Phillip and Bartholomew, and Matthew, who we've talked about before in this series, and Thomas, who is known as what? Doubting

Thomas, right? For good reason. He's the one who doubted the resurrection and told everyone he's not going to believe unless I get some proof. John 20 tells us after Jesus rose from the grave, He appeared to several people and at one time He appeared to the disciples when Thomas was not there. So Thomas said these memorable words. He said, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of His nails, and put my hands in His side, I will not believe." In other words, Thomas says, "I hear what you're saying, I know what you're telling me. I'm not buying it unless you give me some evidence." The stereotypical empiricist is Thomas. Before you're hard on him, I want to remind you all the disciples probably would have said the same thing. None of them really believed in the resurrection until they saw it. The only difference is that the other men got to see Him when Thomas didn't. So the verse says, "Eight days later, Jesus stood in their midst again, when Thomas was there, and said, "Reach here with your finger and see my hands and believe." And Thomas did. Because the Lord showed grace to him. He didn't beat up on Thomas when he was doubting. The way some people act toward doubting believers today, you would think Jesus would have handled it differently. Maybe He should have shown up and said "Wrong, Thomas. Do you think I'm still in the grave? Wrong? Are you having trouble believing? Wrong? Do you not have your Ts crossed and Is dotted? Wrong. Get out of here, Thomas. I don't want to have anything to do with you anymore." No. He took this disciple and built him up. And we all need to learn a lesson from that today. You don't want your favorite word as a Christian to be the word "wrong" toward those who struggle.

And with that said, let me quickly give you one more individual in this group and I can't skip over this guy because I think he's so interesting: that's Simon the Zealot. He's the 11th disciple if you're counting them up, and if you notice, he's not called Simon the cupcake or Simon the cream puff. I had a lot of fun with this. Or Simon the marshmallow. He is a z e a l o t.

Zealot referred to a political party in Israel that had one goal in mind and that was to drive the Romans out with any means necessary. If we have to kill them, fine. If we have to use violence, that's okay. You could look at him as the right-wing terrorist of the day. The Maccabean wars had occurred about 150 years before this, and a lot of the patriotism from that era had never left. It would be a few years after this in AD70 that the Jews would rebel against the Romans again. And when they did, men like Simon who would conduct guerrilla warfare on Roman outposts and burn them. And they would kidnap Roman soldiers whenever they could and assassinate them. And they would murder Jews who were loyal to the Roman cause, because when the violence broke out, there are stories of zealots, taking some of the Jews aside and murdering them along with their families. So needless to say, this guy is a scary person. And Jesus chose him because you know what? Sometimes Jesus chooses scary people. He doesn't call cupcakes all the time, amen. He's not just interested in redeeming cream puffs. There are times when He draws the most hardened criminals to His side. In my mind's eye, I've often looked at this list and I thought, what would it be like to look at Simon the Zealot on one side of the fire looking at Matthew, the tax collector on the other side? It would be a death stare.

But when you look at this list, one thing that you're reminded of is the fact that Jesus calls all sorts of people to follow Him, doesn't He? It's not a one size fits all sort of thing. These men were very diverse to the point that no two of them were really alike. You have Peter the extrovert, Andrew, the introvert. You have James and John the fire balls, and Thomas the fire quencher; he's like a wet blanket on everything. You have Matthew, the liberal tax collector, Simon, the right-wing nut who killed tax collectors for fun. And yet what keeps them from killing each other? It's Jesus. How do they ever get along? It's because of Him and Him alone. It's no different here, by the way. I don't think any of you are trying to kill each other that I'm aware of. If you are, please come see one of the elders right away after the service. But we have extroverts and introverts in the church. You've got fire balls and wet blankets. You have right leaning people, left leaning people, everything in between. What keeps you from killing each other? It's the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, as the disciples would have gone around Israel, you can imagine that people would have said to themselves, "What on earth brought those people together?" I mean, look at them. Did you ever see such a crazy assortment of men? And the answer is that the Messiah did. That's all the work of the Lord.

In fact, when I look at our church, and I think about all the different places you guys come from, it makes me say the same thing at times. Did you ever see such a crazy assortment of people? Well, what makes you get along? Why do you pray for each other? Why do you help each other? Why do you visit each other when someone is sick, and you call them brother? That's not your flesh and blood. Why do you call them sister? That's not your kin, as we say in Tennessee. It's because you have one thing in common and that's the cross. You know what Galatians 3:28, means when it says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, for you're all one in Christ Jesus." You're not all two or three or four or a million; you're one. Another verse is Colossians 3:11, "in which there is no distinction between Jew and Greek for Christ is all in all." And I would say that verse sums this up because that's why you act this way as a church. Christ is all in all. You have nothing else in common but Him. But that's all you need, just like the 12 disciples. That verse could be their theme verse. All of them, but one guy.

They all felt that way about Jesus except for one single person, and that takes you to the last group of disciples that Jesus calls by name here. And I wish I could say that we saved the best for last, but we didn't. It's really the opposite. This is the worst at the last because now after talking about these other apostles, Mark tells you about Judas, which you could refer to as the last disciple. Because whereas all the other ones saw Jesus as their all in all, he did not. Judas never believed in Him. All the years of following Jesus, all the days and weeks and months of hearing sermons didn't have an impact.

And just to say a few words about him, if you notice in verse 19, Mark tells you a little bit about him when he says that he is called Judas Iscariot. And the word "Iscariot" is not his last name. That's where he's from. He's from Iscariot or Kerioth. It's a town in the southern part of Israel located about 20 miles from Jerusalem, in the province of Judea. The significance to that is that Judas is the only disciple who had that distinction. All the other ones came from the province of Galilee, way up in the north, which means that whereas most of these other men probably knew each other, in fact, several of them were

related; they were brothers, Judas might not have known anybody. According to MacArthur, he was an outsider to the group, which might explain some of his behavior. Nevertheless though, the truth is that Jesus treated him the same as everybody. You never find in the Bible's where He acted any differently toward this man. To the point that according to John 12:6, Judas would eventually become the treasurer of the twelve disciples. Imagine that? The banker is the traitor. Even though Matthew was a tax collector who handled money before, they did not give that honour to him because they probably didn't trust him. They didn't trust tax collectors; they gave it to Judas. They thought he was a decent person. Like most of the Jews at the time, by what we can tell Judas probably went to the synagogue, prayed, read the Bible, followed the Lord outwardly, kept his mouth shut while doing so because like Andrew, he doesn't say a lot in the Bible.

Except for one time in John 12 when Jesus goes to the house of Lazarus, to have dinner with him, and while he's there, Mary pours a pound of costly perfume on his feet. Remember that story? Which causes Judas to rebuke her or at least to voice some concern, which causes Jesus to rebuke Him. It's the first negative thing Jesus ever says to Judas and as a result, Judas storm storms off and immediately betrays Him. Because that one remark pushed him over the edge. It's like all the days and weeks and months of unbelief finally reached a boiling point for him. And the one reproof caused him to snap and go sell Him out for 30 pieces of silver. Thirty pieces of silver by the way, it was the price of a slave at the time. In other words, Judas did not bargain very much over the price of Jesus; there's no way you would bargain and come to the number 30. The way it's worded sounds like he just went to the priests and said, "What do you want for Him? Okay, I'll take it."

Because when you look at his life, in a nutshell, it really reminds you of that old saying that everything that glitters ain't gold. And everyone who claims to follow Christ, doesn't. There are people who are faking it. And all it takes is one remark or one trial or one tragedy, and it just pushes them over the edge. You see it in parents who come to church for years faithfully until they lose a child. You see it in husbands who come to church faithfully for years until they lose a job. You see it in wives who come to church faithfully for years until they lose a husband. You see it in kids who come to church faithfully for years until they lose some friends for following Christ, and then poof, everything changes. You never see them again.

That's what this man did as an apostle; that's the worst thing about the story. And that is a Judas is going to act this way after he had been appointed to follow Christ and be with Him and experienced the power that we're talking about up on the mountain. It means no one ever had more of a chance to be saved than this guy. Nobody ever had more opportunities to hear the gospel, listen to the Saviour, see Him face to face and he rejected all of it. And the principle is that if it happened to him, it can happen to anyone. Don't ever think you're too good to reject Christ; you're not. And don't ever buy the lie that you're too special or spiritual to turn your back on Him. That's not true. Judas is a sad reminder of that.

Now as believers we trust in God's election. We know that the saints persevere. He keeps us in the faith. But on the flip side, you can bet that in the beginning, this man was probably passionate for Christ in an outward way. He probably showed a tremendous amount of zeal like everyone else but over time through one compromise after another, it all began to fade. And you need to let his name be a warning to you not to go down that road.

By the way, in every list of the apostles that I could find, Judas' name comes last. And it always says he's the perpetrator or betrayer in order to tell you, you don't want to do what he did. Scholars have kind of wrestled with why his name's last, but one idea is that it's like the gospel writers are telling you, "Yes, you have Peter. And yes, you have James. And yes, you have John, and Andrew, and Philip, and Thomas, and all these good examples of the faith. But you have this one too, and you don't want to forget it." They didn't leave him out. You might think decades later, when they're writing the Gospels, a man like Mark would say, "I don't want to mention this guy. I don't even want to tell you his name, after what he did." But he leaves him in there, so it'll be seared in our minds.

And I would say, if you're the kind of person who likes to play church and fake it, you've sat on the fence long enough. It's time for you to do something and that is to come all the way to the Lord Jesus Christ. And tell yourself, "God have mercy on me, a sinner." Now, you do it now. "I'm sorry I've let my heart grow cold, I'm sorry, I've become apathetic. Lord, I will jump out of the boat and swim to you like Peter did. If I get my clothes messy, I don't care. If people laugh at me, it doesn't matter. I just want to be close to You so I can let you use me like Philip, and burn like James and John, and change my life like Simon, and bring others to Christ like Andrew. But whatever the case, Father, I don't want to stay in the same place that I'm in. Forgive me." Do that and He'll save you.

The Bible tells us that Jesus called the twelve apostles here in Mark 3, the twelve disciples, but the calling doesn't end there, those disciples went out and called others. And those disciples went out and called others. And those other disciples went out and called others for years, until the message has come down to you. You're part of the legacy here. That bloody baton has been passed to you. The question is, what are you going to do with it? What kind of disciple are you going to be? You got two types in the passage. You've got Judas, and everybody else. You need to be like the other men.

And having said that, I really can't end the sermon without going back to the way we started it because I told you the beginning of the time and angel, the legend story, that he came to Jesus after He went to heaven, and asked the Lord, "What if the disciples failed?" But I didn't tell you that there's another legend that came from around the same period, which said that another angel asked Jesus when He went to heaven, "Don't you think that they failed because of Judas?" Look at him. The guy's a total mess. He committed suicide. He brought disgrace on Your name. Don't you think they all blew it? And Jesus said, "No, because the rest of them remained faithful until the end."

Friends, I don't know if you figured this out already, but that's the only thing that matters in the Christian life is faithfulness. You're going to have good and bad days as a Christian. There gonna be highs and lows. There's gonna be times when everything goes well and times when everything doesn't. But the one thing that separates a true believer from a fake is perseverance. Peter failed, and Judas failed. The difference is that Peter went back. And may we all do the same thing today.

Let's close in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, Lord, we thank You for the lessons that we've talked about from these twelve men. They're lessons that we're going to see played out over and over again in the Gospel of Mark as we study it, but as we do so, Lord, we just want to have a sense of sobriety about us. It's so easy to turn these things into an academic exercise or a history lesson and just talk about neat stories about their lives, but at the end of the day, Father, we're all in this room, I believe, because we're professing to be disciples of Christ. And while we're not all called to be preachers, and all called to cast out demons and do miracles, we are all called to follow. And Lord, the sad reality is I'm guessing there are some in this room that are following only outwardly when their hearts are not with it. They show up here and they go through the motions, and they do all these things, but it does not penetrate past the skin level. And Lord, I pray that You would bring conviction on their hearts that they would know they are going in the way of Judas. Lord, would You bring repentance for them?

And for those who are following You with all their heart, I pray they would be encouraged as they hear about all these other men. All these other men that loved You very much, but they stumbled, and they fell. They made their mistakes and yet You showed so much grace as they came back, and You brought them back in Your mercy. Lord, thank You for the perseverance of the saints.

Thank You that in Your sovereign will You bring us back to Christ when we fail. That's where our hope is. Our hope is in Him, in His mercy and grace. And as we leave this place, would we be ambassadors of that grace, and tell others about the Jesus that we've learned about and found? And we pray this all in His name for His glory. Amen.