

I. Intro

A. Text: **Mark 3:13-19**

¹³ And He [Jesus] went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. ¹⁴ Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, ¹⁵ and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: ¹⁶ Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; ¹⁷ James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder"; ¹⁸ Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house. (Mark 3:13-19)

B. Recap:

1. Andrew and Peter: 2 brothers who followed Jesus closely and impacted the world through the work of Christ in their lives.
 - a. 2 Completely different personalities and leadership styles.
 - b. Peter was always in the forefront.
 - c. Andrew happily played the background.
 - i. He was rarely spoken of in the scripture outside of the qualifier that he was Peter's brother.
 - ii. He was never recorded as preaching sermons before thousands or writing any bestseller books.
 - d. But Andrew had a knack for bringing others to Jesus.
 - e. Without the spotlight, Andrew embodied the heart of his former teacher, John the Baptist:
 - i. He was the friend of the Bridegroom who delighted in preparing the way for others to encounter Jesus.

C. Background: James and John (The Sons of Zebedee)

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1. John Had a Great Connection with Andrew: First Disciples to Encounter Jesus
 - a. Obviously, Andrew and John the Son of Zebedee were friends who were thirsty for something... Looking for something.
 - b. They were both fisherman who had thriving family businesses, but were looking for something more.
 - c. Along with Andrew, John left Galilee to follow John the Baptist in the wilderness.
 - i. Like Andrew, John was discipled by John the Baptist before he ever had a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus.
 - ii. But he was ready... He was primed and pumped for a personal encounter with Jesus.
 - iii. One day Jesus showed up beyond the Jordan and John the Baptist introduced John the Son of Zebedee to Jesus the Son of God: *"Behold the Lamb of God"* (**Jn. 1:36**)
 - d. John and Andrew immediately left John the Baptist for Jesus.
 - i. They spent intimate time with Jesus that I am convinced changed their lives forever.
 - e. Andrew immediately brought Peter to Jesus.
 - i. And it is implied that John also went back and recruited his brother James and told him about Jesus.
 2. John and James: First to Forsake All (with Peter and Andrew)
 - a. After encountering Jesus beyond the Jordan, all these early disciples went back to work with their families.
 - b. John and James likely came from a prominent and well-to-do family (as they were known by the prestige of their father's name: The sons Zebedee).

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- i. Their mother's name was Salome and she came to be one of the several women who followed Jesus and partnered with him in the ministry (**Matt. 27:55-56**)
 - ii. Zebedee was a Levite whose name carried weight all the way from Galilee to Jerusalem.
 - c. Several months after encountering Jesus beyond the Jordan, Jesus came to Capernaum of Galilee.
 - i. There He called the two sets of brothers (Andrew/Peter and James/John) to follow Him permanently (**Matt. 4:18-22**).

*¹⁸ And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. ²¹ Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, ²² and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. (**Matt. 4:18-22**)*

- d. While they were working at the only thing they knew well (fishing), Jesus called them to a life of forsaking everything... in exchange for following Him.
 - i. Not only did John and James leave their boat, but they left their father (**v. 22**).
 - ii. That was a huge deal.
 - e. From this point, James and John (along with Andrew and Peter) full time.
- 3. John and James All Enjoyed an Intimate Place with Jesus.
 - a. Peter, James, John (and at times Andrew) seemed to have enjoyed an special place of intimacy with Jesus that the other disciples didn't enjoy.

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- i. Only James, John and Peter were permitted to go in when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (**Mk. 5:37**)
 - ii. Only James, John and Peter were taken up the mountain by Jesus to witness Him being transfigured (**Matt. 17:1-9**)
 - iii. Only James, John and Peter were urged to pray with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.
 - 4. James and John Were Both likely young men
 - a. Scholars believe that John was a VERY young adult (possibly a teenager) when he encountered Jesus.
 - i. It was likely that James was in his 20's when he began following Jesus

II. The Sons of Thunder (Photos)

A. James and John were rough around the edges in every way!

- 1. These brothers were so rough that Jesus gave them a nickname:

*¹⁷ James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder" (**Mk. 3:17**)*

- a. Boanerges: denotes a zeal that is destructive like Thunder.

B. Destructive & Thunderous History

- 1. Fire and Brimstone with No Compassion (**Lk. 9:51-56**)

*⁵¹ Now it came to pass, when the time had come for [Jesus] to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, ⁵² and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. ⁵³ But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" ⁵⁵ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. ⁵⁶ For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village. (**Lk. 9:51-56**)*

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- a. Jesus was headed to Jerusalem for the last time.
 - i. Although every Jew avoided Samaria at all costs, Jesus had a passion for the people of Samaria.
 - ii. Jesus has a heart for the rejected and despised, but the rejected and despised so often reject Him.
 - b. James and John: Jesus, you want us to knock them off?
(v. 54)
 - i. Jesus rebuked them. Zealousness without grace is dangerous. (v. 55)
 - c. Many of us have a lot of Boanerges in us!
 - i. We don't have the patience nor the compassion that it takes to minister to those who are far from God.
 - ii. Jesus has no problem rebuking this religious mind-set, because it reveals that there are serious heart issues.

2. Posing for Pomp and Position (Mk. 10:35)

³⁵ Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask." ³⁶ And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" ³⁷ They said to Him, "Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory." ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" ³⁹ They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared." ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. (Mk. 10:35-41)

- a. Selfish and arrogant: "Teacher, we want you to do whatever we ask." (v. 35)
 - i. Reveals how we approach God sometimes.
- b. Jesus was so patient: He actually took the time to engage in the dialogue!

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- i. What do you want me to do for you? (**v. 36**)
 - ii. Give us the most prestigious seats in the kingdom. (**v. 37**)
 - iii. You have no clue what you're asking. Are you able to drink this cup that I'm about to drink. Are you able to endure this suffering that I'm about to suffer? (**v. 38**)
 - c. Needless to say, James and John were starting to get on the other disciples nerves. (**v. 41**)
3. Set Trippin' On Other Believers (**Mk. 9:38-40**)
- a. Not only were James and John impatient, intolerant and selfish, but they were "set-trippers" at best and possibly "religious bigots" at worst.

*³⁸ Now John answered Him, saying, "Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in Your name, and we forbade him because he does not follow us." ³⁹ But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. ⁴⁰ For he who is not against us is on our side..." (**Mk. 9:38-40a**)*

- b. Jesus, we saw folks doing your service on the other side of town, but they didn't have a TRC hat on.
 - i. They're not from our denomination. They don't sing the same songs we sing. They don't do ministry the way we do ministry.
 - ii. Don't worry, we checked them right away.
 - c. He who is not against us, is on our side (**v. 40**)
 - i. Funny that we often display this same territorial short-sightedness today in church.
 - d. But again, Jesus rebuked their religiosity (their territorial set-tripping) but Jesus did not give up on these knuckle-headed brothers! And that outta make somebody want to shout.
 - i. My brother, my sister. Jesus stands against your selfish, ugly attitude and demeanor toward others, but He hasn't given up on you.

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- ii. He wants to change you from the inside out... like He did James and John.

III. Conclusion: I Can Relate and Rejoice

A. I take great delight in reading about the character flaws, the shortcomings and hang-ups of the men and women of the Bible.

1. The more I look at their lives, the more I realize that they are no different than my own.
 - a. Jesus' disciples were ordinary in every way.
 - b. Which leaves me no opportunity to brag about them, but leaves me a great platform to brag about the transforming power of Jesus.
2. Jesus met the disciples right where they were at (with all of their flaws and imperfections), but He refused to leave them that way.
3. Of all the miracles that Jesus performed on the earth (water to wine, the lame walked, blind eyes were opened to see, etc.), I think that we often miss one of the greatest miracles ever recorded in scripture: Jesus' ability to transform hearts, to crucify flesh, and to produce new creations.

B. James: James was the 1st disciple to die as a martyr.

1. Pretty much every other disciple of Jesus died a violent death. But James was first.
 - a. James is not only the 1st to die as a martyr, his death is the only one recorded in scripture (**Acts 12:1-3a**)

Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some from the church. ² Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. ³ And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. (Acts 12:1-3a)

- b. Herod Agrippa decided to go on a killing spree to win the favor of his Jewish constituents and James was first. Peter would have been next.

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- i. Herod probably targeted who he thought were the leaders of the 12 apostles.
 2. James' life was short, but God used him miraculously right up until his death.
 - a. Eusebius (Church Historian) passed on the account of James' death by Clement of Alexandria.
 - b. The one who escorted James to his death was so moved by James' testimony during his interrogation, that he publicly repented on the spot and confessed Christ as his Lord and Savior.
 - i. He begged James to forgive him.
 - ii. Apparently, James embraced him and tenderly kissed him on the cheek.
 - c. James and his supposed executor were then executed together.

*By the end of his life James was more like Andrew, connecting people to Jesus, than the judgmental, condemning Son of Thunder that he used to be.

- C. John: John outlived all the other disciples by decades. He lived until the end of the first century (where He was almost 100 years old).
 1. He served as the encourager, mentor and the bridge that connected young Jesus followers who were 2 generations removed from Jesus walking on the earth.
 2. John eventually wrote 5 different books that appear in our canon of scripture: Gospel of John, 1st John, 2nd John, 3rd John and Revelation.
 - a. John wrote more than any other N.T. writer (other than Paul and Luke).
 3. John became widely known as "The Beloved" disciple: the Disciple whom Jesus loved.
 - a. Of course... Jesus loved Him! But he loved Jesus!
 - i. John came to share an intimacy with Jesus that set the precedent for personal intimacy with Jesus that we still look to some 2000 years later.

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- b. This rough, calloused Son of Thunder came to be known for His tender love for the body of Christ that sprang out from the tender intimacy he shared with Jesus.
 - 4. Make no mistake about it: Love was not a characteristic that John was born with. Love was only a bi-product of years spent in the face of Jesus.
- D. Ultimately, Jesus took ordinary arrogant, prideful, judgmental, territorial, insecure men and did the impossible with them: He changed them from the inside out.
- 1. He transformed them into mighty vessels to display His glory.
 - 2. I realize that we are talking about James and John (almost 2,000 years ago).
 - a. But if Jesus transformed them, why not you and I?