

22 – Jesus Ordaining the Twelve

Series on Mark

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We turn now to the Gospel of Mark as we continue our exposition. Chapter 3, verses 13 through 19, and then at the same time we want to also read Revelation 21, six verses there. Mark 3:13-19.

13 And [Jesus] goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. 14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, 15 And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils: 16 And Simon he surnamed Peter; 17 And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: 18 And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite, 19 And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

Then Revelation 21:9-14.

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. 10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; 12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Thus far the reading of holy Scripture.

Our text this morning is from Mark 3:13-19 and I'll read just now again just verses 13 through 15, "And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils." Well, our theme this morning is "Jesus Ordaining the Twelve." We'll look at three thoughts: the setting; the specifics; and the significance. Jesus ordaining the 12: the setting, the specifics and the significance.

So today we're called to consider the unique privilege, responsibility, and office of the 12, the apostles, and if we are truly Christians, we are apostolic Christians, we embrace the apostolic testimony and witness to Jesus Christ recorded not only in the sermons of the apostles in the book of Acts, but also in the many New Testament apostolic books, and if we're a truly Christian church, we are so because we've subjected ourselves to the apostolic directives for the constitution and the ordering of the churches of Jesus Christ. So because we are apostolic Christians and an apostolic church by the grace of God, a sermon that traces the origins of the apostolate or the apostolic office should be of great interest to us and it should be of practical concern to members of the visible church for, after all, we claim with the New Testament that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ, Ephesians 2:19-20, himself the chief cornerstone.

So our text this morning is not just a mere text of some information, a historical side-light, this is one of the most critical events in the entire ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. So first let's look, then, at the setting of this major event, the historical setting, the geographical setting, and the spiritual setting. You notice a couple interesting historical elements. First of all, Mark 3:6 makes clear that at this juncture in Christ's ministry, the intense opposition that he had been experiencing in the southern part of Palestine and in Judea and around Jerusalem has now gone to the north in Galilee where Jesus has been ministering and we saw last time that what is happening in his early ministry is that now it's actually mid-ministry, what's happening is the opposition is coming north even as his popularity is growing. So there are masses of crowds but intermixed with the crowds are the Pharisees and the scribes who are listening to every word that they might capture him and kill him. So there's a rising popularity and a rising opposition and Jesus is coming under increasing pressure in his ministry.

Now knowing that it will be yet another year to 18 months before he will be crucified, Jesus is very much aware that he has, the clock is ticking and he has just a certain amount of time, you see, to establish the apostles in their office to send them out eventually in preaching, and to delegate others to proclaim his message and validate that message so that when he dies and is resurrected and sends forth his spirit, they may carry on that message. You see, there's quite a difference in our seminary too between a first semester student and a student who's in his third year. As things get closer and as he begins to speak in the churches, the pressure is ramping up for that student to speak with authority, to speak in the name of the Savior, and so it was with Jesus in his ministry. He needed apostles in his human nature to carry on the baton of ministry, to carry on his message, to establish the New Testament church. So to leave behind the kind of church that he

expounded about in Matthew 16, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against, it pleases him to select 12 men with himself as the chief cornerstone to be foundation blocks in the building of this worldwide church.

So that's the historical setting where we're at at the moment in the history of Jesus' ministry. Now geographically, it's fascinating that in verse 13 we read, Jesus "goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him." A mountain. Now from the previous passage, remember Jesus had left the city, probably Capernaum, he had gone down to the shores of the sea of Galilee and was ministering so close to the shore and the multitudes were so great, remember he had a boat there in case the people pressured him overwhelmingly, he could escape in the boat. But Mark tells us now that he actually leaves those lakeside masses and he finds his way up into a mountain, we would probably call a large hill, but Palestine not having many mountains, they call what we would call a large hill, they called mountains. We don't know what large hill or mountain this was but it was obviously within a couple of miles of the sea of Galilee, probably it was the Horns of Hattin, twin peaks that are four miles west of the sea of Galilee. But since the sea of Galilee has other medium sized hills around it, perhaps it could have been one of those as well. That's not that important but what is important is that this was not an arbitrary retreat. When Jesus left the masses, he wanted to take a group of men to himself in a more intimate and permanent form of attachment who would follow him to his mountain retreat and so he invites a whole number of men, how many we don't know if it was 70 or 50, but it was a group of men and he invites them to come with him into a mountain for a time of spiritual refreshment and teaching.

Now that sheds light, then, upon the spiritual climate, the spiritual milieu surrounding this ordaining of the 12. We read in Luke 6:12 in the parallel account, "it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples," that is, those who he had a closer relationship with, "and from among them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles." So Luke sheds some light here. Actually, Jesus initially, then, goes by himself into those high hills and must have sent out a message or something to gather a bunch of men with him the next day, but for that particular journey into the hill, Jesus went first of all to pray. Now that's fascinating for this reason. Jesus knows the hearts of all men. Jesus could see everything. Jesus has wisdom to pick out those whom he knows would best serve him and yet Jesus makes it a matter of great prayer and you see how much more we in our present situation with a dear pastor feeling called to move on elsewhere, how much more we need to cry out to God in prayer to lead and to guide us. If the Son of Man who knows all things spent a whole night in prayer with fasting to try to decide who he would select to be the church's leaders, how much more we who cannot see the heart of man, we whose knowledge is so limited, need the guidance of the most high God. Jesus understands how absolutely critical it is who these 12 men are, just like it is absolutely critical for any local church whom they call, that they call the right man, a man fit for the sheep and the sheep fitting for that man.

So this example this morning is actually a call to us to plead with God for wisdom and guidance not in the selection of the 12 but in the selection of the one or of how we should

approach the future. So it's likely on the very next day that he preached the Sermon on the Mount, according to Matthew 5, 6 and 7, but that night Jesus engages in earnest prayer. He knows that the 12 he picks will be inseparable from the fundamental constitution of the spiritual kingdom of the new age that he came to establish and these 12 would have a unique place in the foundation of the universal church until the end times when he would come again on the clouds. So exactly what Jesus prayed we're not told, but we can be sure, we can be sure that he's praying for God's help, his Father's help in his human nature and guidance, that he would do what is well-pleasing to his Father, and in that, we ought to receive a rebuke to our own self-confidence and our own prayerlessness as we too often think we can handle things ourselves and don't need to engage in prayer and fasting.

Now perhaps you might ask, "But didn't Jesus already call some of these men?" Well, yes, at various stages, however, but this is something different. He's now calling them to instate them in the apostolic office. That had not yet been done, as we'll see in a little while. So Jesus really does what we are called to do which Proverbs 3 summarizes so well in major life decisions, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Jesus is a beautiful mentor for us in fulfilling these verses here in our text. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge reside in him and yet he goes to prayer, an all night vigil of prayer, before he enters upon the selection of those upon whose shoulders will rest the awesome responsibility of leading his church.

That should teach us something very practical. Our lives should have two kinds of prayer, what our forefathers called deliberate prayer and occasional prayer, and what the Puritans in particular meant by deliberate prayer was those set times, those set seasons of prayer that you set aside like Jesus did here. Occasional prayer were those short prayers, those darting prayers that dart up to God that are so abundant for example in the book of Nehemiah when Nehemiah is standing before the king and he just darts up a prayer, "O God, help me. O God, do me good." You know, throughout the day, you know what that's like, right? You have all these situations where you need God's help and you just dart up a little prayer in the midst of your work or while you're driving, and that's well and good but there should also be, you see, in times of importance, times of decisions, not just your ordinary quiet time with God, your devotional time, but times that you set aside, I'm going to seek God's face in earnest maybe for half an hour or something, or an hour, it doesn't have to be all night, but a time set aside to seek God's face for this particular decision. You meditate, you pray, you read Scripture, you humble yourself before God. That's what Jesus is doing here.

Now this, then, is the setting of the occasion of calling and ordaining the 12. The specifics. There are interesting, that's my second thought, there are interesting specifics here about how Jesus does this. The first specific is the author of the choice which, of course, is Jesus himself. Mark's emphasis is very clear. "He goes up into a mountain and calleth unto him whom he would, and they came unto him." So Jesus is controlling the whole situation. "He goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him. And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he

might send them forth to preach." Seven times him, he, his. Seven times. You see, in the Greek it's the emphatic tense, it's the reflexive pronoun, who he himself would call. This is his exclusive activity as he cries out to his Father. He makes this decision himself.

You see the same emphasis in Luke's account where the standard word for God's electing grace and mercy, election to life is used. Luke 6:13, "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose," literally elected, "twelve, whom also he named apostles." So Jesus isn't asking for volunteers; he's not opening the floor for nominations; he's not ratifying personal ambition. He's exercising the regal sovereign rights of the God of the universe, the author of this choice is Jesus Christ himself. That's why Paul would later say, "He gave some apostles," to the Ephesians, "by the exercise of his own sovereign will," you see, and this is a reflection that Jesus is always in charge. Even though he prays to his Father, he's in charge. He's in charge even of each one of our lives, also in the choosing. In fact, he's in the charge of all mankind in the choosing. John 15:16 says, "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," elected you, "and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

So that's the first thing. It's all about Jesus, whom he would. He's the author. But secondly, we see here in the specifics the results of the choice, and our text mentions two important results. The first is that 12 men are chosen and constituted, named apostles. Notice verse 14, "And he ordained," that is, appointed or constituted, "twelve," and to that Luke 6:13 adds, "he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles." Boys and girls, do you know why Jesus chose 12? Why didn't he choose 11 or 13? Well, maybe you have an idea and you're probably right. There were 12 tribes of Israel, weren't there, and they were the heads of each tribe, one of Jacob's sons. Jacob had 12 sons and his 12 sons became head of the 12 tribes of the ancient nation of Israel, and in selecting 12 apostles, Jesus is demonstrating that he was constituting these men as the patriarchs of the new Israel, the New Testament age church.

That's why I read Revelation 21 to you this morning, because that's made very clear there. If you just want to turn there a moment with me, that would be helpful. If you look at Revelation 21 and look at verse 9, "there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." And the bride is, of course, the church. Jesus loves the church and he gave himself for his bride, but then the next two verses continue this theme, "he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain," notice the parallel, and what does he see? "And shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God." You see, here the bride is set before him as the city of God, the new Jerusalem. Do you see the connection? He's saying, "I will show you the bride," then he carries John away and John sees the city of God, new Jerusalem, and so the church now is under a different figure, that which Scripture calls the Jerusalem which is above, and John sees the vision that that church that is above is glorified and perfected now and there has, verse 12, "a high wall, 12 gates, and at the gates 12 angels which are written on the gates the names of the 12 tribes of the children of Israel." But then verse 14 and here the connection is made, "And

the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

So God is telling us in a beautiful symbolic yet simple way that the bride, the church, the new Jerusalem, is constituted of those who were gathered out of ancient literal Israel and those who are gathered out of the new Israel, the new established church of the New Testament age until the end of time. So these are not two cities, not Israel over here and then the church over there, two separate lines that never meet like dispensationalism teaches in America today, but there's one people of God, one city of God, one bride, one wife of the Lamb. So Jesus in choosing 12 apostles, chooses 12 so that immediately the Jews around him steeped in Old Testament knowledge, would sense the organic connection between the 12 tribes of ancient Israel and the new people of God, the new Israel being constituted by the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the term "apostle" here refers to a very very special office. There's only 12 and they represent the foundations of the New Testament church, which is really a continuation of Old Testament Israel only with this difference, that of course, now Christ has come and will fulfill everything the Old Testament was pointing to so that now we need new sacraments that are bloodless because he will shed his blood and so on.

Now the word "apostle" simply means "one sent forth." In Greek that's all it means, and so sometimes in the New Testament the word "apostle" is used in that more general way of Barnabas, for example, and Epaphroditus and Apollos and two or three others are called apostles in that sense that they're sent forth. There's a book written about a Scottish divine from the 17th century, the subtitle is, "The Apostle to the North." He's sent forth by the churches to the north, that's all it means. In this sense, you see, the apostle is with a small "a" but when you speak of the Apostle Paul, for example, you're using a capital A because you're speaking of one who is given to this particular office. And we know, of course, that Judas Iscariot was deposed from the office for betraying Jesus. Matthias took his place and subsequently, and that's a very unusual case, we're told that Paul himself as one born out of due time, was designated by Christ as an apostle. So in that sense, of course, you have a 13th one but that is not reflected in the way, Paul's a unique case. But to be an apostle is to be nothing less than a foundation stone in the everlasting church of Jesus Christ being undergirded by the chief cornerstone. So the apostles had a unique authority given to them directly by Christ but also a unique power to validate that appointment. That's why Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:12, "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds."

So that's the first result of the choice of Jesus. Twelve men are chosen, constituted, and then named apostles. So today, there is no more the apostolic office. The whole movement going on in Brazil and a little bit in America as well, of the Apostles' Church, that men think that they're apostles again, or Mormonism with its Apostle Joseph Smith who supposedly found plates and developed the Book of Mormon, and other restorationists and other charismatics who call themselves apostles, these are all kinds of heresies that don't understand that Jesus established his church with 12 apostles. That was a special, extraordinary office that lasted just a little while until the canon was complete

and once the New Testament canon was complete, we now have the apostolic authority in the full word of God and we don't need apostles anymore. A unique, a special office.

But then also you notice this other detail, result of Jesus' choice, that these 12 are marked out and set apart for a special relationship to Christ, and to have a special task for Christ. Look again at verse 14, "he ordained twelve," notice this is a purpose clause here, "so that," this is the reason why, the purpose, "they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, And to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils." Now that's fascinating. He ordained the 12 in the first place so that they should be with him, to have a special relationship with him. That's a very interesting statement, isn't it? We said earlier, we said earlier in the exposition of the book of Mark, Jesus' first calls them, doesn't he, by confronting them under John's ministry. That was step 1. Step 2 was the initial response of faith in the Lamb which takes away the sin of the world, not they went back to their fishing. Step 3 was he called them by the sea of Galilee and they left their fishing occupations and became part of the band who followed him wherever he went. But now this is the apex, this is step 4, he calls them to be apostles to be with him, to enjoy in intimacy of association in order to prepare them for their task of apostles. They're to be with him, to observe him, to observe his life, to be his friends, to observe his mighty works and power, his ways of dealing with men, to be trained in the immediate presence of the Son of God, to go out and herald his message and even to do the works that he did including the casting out of devils. A very special office indeed.

It seems that the only thing that Jesus did not give them from his own ministry is the power to handle the physical creation. They could even cast out demons and Matthew adds they could even raise the dead, but they didn't have the power, it appears, to handle the physical creation. They couldn't rebuke storms like Jesus could. There's no record that they could multiply loaves and fishes like Jesus could. But they are his representatives. The apostles who reflect their identity with him as the Incarnate God and as the Messiah, they're basically an extension of the Lord Jesus Christ going forth to do his stead, under his authority, by his power what he would have them to do in the cities and villages of the 12 tribes of Israel. So this is very special indeed.

Then the third specific is the names of the 12 ordained as apostles, and you'll see that in verses 16 through 19. It's fascinating to look at the four places where the 12 apostles are listed like this in the Gospels. The fourth one is in Acts 1, actually, but three in the Gospels. The fourth one, of course, you have only 11 because Judas is gone to his place, as the Bible says. But there's a pattern in all of them. They're always listed in groups of four and Peter is always listed first, Philip is always listed fifth, and James is always listed ninth, but within these three groups of four, there is a mixture in terms of order, but obviously, Peter then is the lead apostle, the unspoken leader always listed first, and the one that's always listed last is Judas Iscariot, but in between there's an inversion of order. You don't always have the same order from Peter down to Philip or from Philip through James or James through Judas, but you see, even within among the 12 there was a different level of organization and especially among the first grouping are the closest friends of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, I want to show you the significance of these things after we sink first in our third thought, the significance. There are six significant things about the choice of the 12 I want to set before you before we close this morning. The first is did you notice they were all males? In a day when women were oppressed, demeaned, exploited, Jesus, as you well know, in his ministry became a great example of care and of gentleness toward women. In many ways, women were liberated in Christianity more than ever before because of the example of Jesus. He elevated womanhood to its true dignified position. Jesus was no male chauvinist. He gave privileges to certain women that he denied to men. Women were the last as he was buried to see it. Women were the first in the morning of resurrection. Women are elevated by Jesus. Wherever the Gospel has gone, wherever women have been oppressed and exploited, the Gospel has come with healing power to raise womanhood to its true God-intended dignity but there are no female apostles and why not? Well, because it would have been cruel to put a woman in a position for which God never made her. God never made a woman to authoritatively lead men in the church.

1 Timothy 2:12-15 is an extended commentary on that very principle, a principle the church, the worldwide church desperately needs to hear today. There are so many things women can do, should do, must do in the church, for the church, by the church, but they are not to exercise positions of authoritative leadership in ecclesiastical anointed offices. That's not a put-down of women, that's just God's biblical command. If Jesus had felt differently, he would have had at least one woman among them, wouldn't he? But no, no women to be apostles. He had many women who were good friends but none to be apostles, and today he continues to choose men for office-bearing capacity in the church of Jesus Christ. No bishop, no consistory, no council, no presbytery, no synod should ever ordain a woman into an ecclesiastical office. It runs contrary to Jesus' example, not only, but to the clear teaching of the Apostle Paul. This is God's ordained way.

Second, we see here the significance that most of them were insignificant. According to human judgment, this was a motley group of nobody's. There is no famous men among them with great name recognition, at least not to begin with. They did become famous but we have no previous history on several of them. Four of them, we're told, they were just fishermen, a lowly occupation. One was a despised tax collector. The surname is only given for three of them, to Peter which supplies an intimation of what grace would make him, to James and John, the sons of thunder, which informs us a bit about their natural temperament, but very little is said. Only this we know: they were unlearned, relatively ignorant Palestinians drawn, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, from the region of Galilee, a despised region. No great ones in this band that's going to turn the world upside down, and from the band of the larger group of disciples, he chooses 12 we would say today insignificant men.

Now why? Why would Jesus choose insignificant men? Well, if they're forming the foundation stones of the church, the church is going to be reflected in the foundation stones and Jesus has said in 1 Corinthians 1, "You see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, many noble are called, but God chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and God chooses the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty and base things of the world, things

which are despised hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not to bring to naught things that are, that," here comes the purpose clause, "no flesh should glory in his presence." The foolish, the weak, the base, the despised, the things that are not. One commentator calls these designations God's five ranked army of descending human weakness. You start with the foolish, you end up with the things that are nothing and Jesus says, "I'm going to take these foolish nothings and I'm going to have them change the world and turn it upside down and this kingdom will never end and the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church."

Oh, what a contrast these 12 were with the esteemed religious doctors of the law who said, "This multitude that knows not the law, they follow him but we wise ones, we don't. We've got more sense than to follow him. We're not the gullible type. We know he's a despised prophet. We know he's a fake." You see, you and I should praise God for the pattern of God's choice of those who make up the living stones in his church to this day because this is what gives us hope because we are all a bunch of nobody's and he takes us insignificant though we are, and he chooses us and he remakes us and refashions us and brings us to know him and to love him so that no flesh can glory in his presence.

The third take-away from the ordaining of the 12 is this: that we should notice the significance of the vast diversity of natural temperaments, backgrounds and perspectives among the 12. There are no clones here. It's a motley bunch and Jesus brings them with all kinds of personalities together to be the official leaders of the church. You know, when a consistory tries to put up other men just like them and get semi-cloning, get a whole bunch of men that are exactly the same, that's not for the welfare of the church. Jesus particularly chose people from different areas, different religious and cultural heritages. One is called Simon the Zealot. Most likely he was a man who had previously joined a party that was determined to throw off the yoke of Rome so he was like an insurrectionist, and yet right beside him sits Matthew who collects taxes for the Roman government and is despised by the Jews. Well, if there's ever a situation to create tension, political tension, it's here. Simon and Matthew are two of the 12.

But then there's a great difference in temperament. There's volatile impetuous Peter and there's quiet Bartholomew, contemplative, probably called Nathaniel, sitting under a tree thinking about the Messiah. Then there's the character of John. We think of him as very loving but he was a son of thunder. The strongest language in New Testament epistles is found in the Johannine epistles, isn't it? Liar. Antichrist. Murderer. John uses gutsy strong language. He's a son of thunder.

Ken Hughes has this interesting two or three sentences here. "We are know the story, wavering inconsistent Simon became Peter, the rock. John and James became Boanerges, the sons of thunder, dynamic apostles. Anonymous average Andrew became the patron saint of three nations. Thomas, a skeptic, became a tenacious man of faith. Simon the radical, subversive zealot, became a man truly zealous for God. The same happened to others outside the 12 as well. Loathsome Levi or Matthew became the writer of the Gospel of the Son of Man.

Jesus takes this very diverse group of 12, he teaches them, he trains them when they're with him, and they work in remarkable harmony for the incoming of his kingdom to set up the foundation stones of the church of Jesus Christ. He's doing the same thing today. What a beautiful thing it is with spiritual leaders of different backgrounds, different occupations, different gifts come together, speak from heart to heart. Looking at it, even this consistory with all the different backgrounds, looking at these 21 or 22 men, you'd say there's tremendous potential for division and friction but when you're taught by Jesus, there's a beautiful harmony and we're blessed with great harmony in many ways. It could always be better, of course, we live in a fallen world, but there's a wonderful harmony. Iron sharpens iron. Iron sharpens iron and we seek to come around the word of God, seek to be led by Jesus. So Jesus is wise in the selection of the 12.

Now, fourth, notice the significance that some of these 12 became prominent and eminently useful. All the apostles, I said, are the foundation of the church. In heaven, each name is on one gate. No one's name is on two gates. No one's name is skipped. They're all there. But as the church moved along, some of them came into more prominent positions. Some became famous. Some remained relatively unknown. You don't know much about Bartholomew, do you? You know a lot more about Peter and John and James. They're given influence in the letters they've also written. It underscores again the great truth that the wise, sovereign, head of the church marks out all these matters and the point, the point is that everyone be content in his own appointed sphere. 1 Corinthians 3:7, that's Paul's instruction, "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase."

The worst thing that can happen in a church is that one man gets jealous of another man's gifts and blessings. That's abhorrent in God's eyes. We just use whatever gifts we have and we cast them forward and see what the Lord will do with them. There's no indication that Andrew, apparently Peter's older brother, was jealous or envious of Peter who became much more famous than he was. The grace of God was at work in both of them and so it should be in us as well. Usefulness and prominence does not mean necessarily greater blessing or that life is easier. Actually it's not, but it's just God's sovereign way with each man.

And then, five, notice the significance that one of the 12, one of the 12 would betray Jesus. What a sad point this is, but the conclusion of our text in verse 19 leaves us no choice but to talk about it, "And Judas Iscariot," verse 19, "which also betrayed him: and they went into an house." And Judas Iscariot which also betrayed him, one of the 12 that Jesus picked out. What a sad sad truth. Judas from Kerioth, a city in southern Judea, the only non-Galilean betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ.

So we learn from this solemn truth that someone elected to service and usefulness in ministry can ultimately prove to be a stranger of grace. We're not saved by office-bearing but you might ask how could Jesus knowing what's in man had chosen Judas? I can't solve that mystery for you. Calvin asked four questions about it, gives very biblical wise answers, but this point we want to make clear: visible attachment to Jesus is no proof of saving grace. Visible office-bearing, visible usefulness in the service of Christ is no proof

of grace. Could that be what Jesus wants to teach us? He chose 12 that they might be with him, might be in intimate association with him, but even one of those 12 went his own way.

It's a warning for us. And none of the other 11 suspected Judas. He was a treasurer, in fact, and he coveted money. He was holding the bag but no one came to Jesus and said, "You know what? Something doesn't sit right with Judas. I'm concerned about him." No one noticed it. And when Jesus said, "One of you will betray me," they didn't whisper, "Ah, I think it's Judas." No, he looked just as sincere as all the rest. There's not a thread of evidence in the Gospels to indicate that Judas was less esteemed among the 12 than anyone else. It's a scary thing.

He betrayed Jesus after hearing all those lessons, after witnessing all those things, after being drawn into Jesus' inner circle, sharing in all the attractions of the Gospel. What a double-minded man Judas must have been. He was radically selfish and he was following a radically selfless prophet. He was there when Jesus said, "Let's take a little break." And no sooner had they got to the spot when the multitudes came before them, Jesus forgot his break and in self-giving love poured himself out in ministry to the needy. Somewhere along the line Judas must have thought to himself, "If I'm going to be comfortable in the presence of this selfless man, my greedy, covetous and grasping spirit must be transformed by his Spirit." But rather than cry to God for a new heart, he calculated to live a double life that led to hanging himself and going straight to hell.

My friends, that should make us tremble, all of us as office-bearers, me too. We're all in the company of many people. They may have various forms of usefulness in the advancement of the kingdom of Christ, you may be involved in various church ministries as well, but none of that is proof of grace in your heart. We need God. We need God to strip us of all our sin-loving lusts of the flesh, our darling sins, be it lust or pride or envy or ambition or greed or whatever it is. We need to break with the dominion of sin. We need Jesus to extend the rule of himself to every area of our heart. We need to be true disciples from within our soul. And God forbid we ever use church ministry as a substitute for genuine spirituality. May God search our hearts and may we not be able to go on if we're living a double life, living a double life in outward appearance and calculated deception. If you're playing that game, my friend, repent immediately. You're headed for destruction. Flee to Christ who can give mercy even to the double-minded because he will make you single-minded and he will turn you around.

And the last thing I want to say, add a sixth thing here, is that I think we learn from this example the beauty of friendship, that Jesus himself needed friends in his human nature. He was fully human and to be truly and fully human means to be made for friendship. God said it already pre-fall, Genesis 2:18, "It's not good for man to be alone." So Jesus wanted them with him, don't you think, not only for their sake, to train them so they could go out and be the 12 apostles, but also for his own sake. For his own sake. He was a people person. He wanted men around him with whom he could be close, with whom he could bare his mind, who could bear witness to him and he to them so that they could

be exposed to his powerful life and ministry, yes, but so that he could also find comfort in their close friendships with him.

Now Jesus wasn't ashamed to have close friends and closer friends and closest friends. The 12 were close, or should I say the 11, and then the three were closer, Peter, James and John, but there was only one who could say "the apostle whom Jesus loved." That was John. When he went into the garden, he took three, the closer, but then he went all alone. Even the closest could not be with him when he paid for your sin, dear child of God, and trod the winepress alone, and that was a big part of the suffering as well. No one could enter the Holy of Holies with him and pay the bloody price of your salvation.

So what does that mean for you and for me? It means that still today we can be with Jesus. You know, when the apostles carried on the church after Jesus ascended into heaven, he sent his Spirit to help them. You read these amazing words when they came before the Sanhedrin, "They took note that these men had been with Jesus." That was the secret of their lives. Is that the secret of your life? Do you know what it means to be with Jesus all alone? Do you know what it means to share about Jesus with your closest friends? Do you have such friends? You see, it's still possible to be with him today, to be in Christ today by saving faith and to be a close friend of Jesus today. The closer the better and the closer we are with Jesus, normally the closer we are with the people of God who are close with him.

So we, too, need friendships today, close communion with one another. I believe in the communion of saints and iron can sharpen iron in those close friendships. People couldn't figure the apostles out. They were unschooled yet they spoke with authority. They didn't have that of themselves, you see, they were with Jesus and they were with one another and the Spirit was with them and that's all we need. You see, if you have Jesus, you have the wisest in the world with you. Then you can be a scholar in the best of schools, the school of Jesus, and you'll have wisdom beyond this world's wisdom. People will sit up and they'll notice you have been with Jesus.

What a blessing and what a blessing to testify of him wherever you go. Yesterday morning I had to get up early to take the plane back from New Castle, England, and they sent a taxi driver to pick me up. The man said he had a good wife, he had good kids, but he didn't believe in an afterlife, he didn't believe in Jesus, but he said he thought he was alright. If there was an afterlife, he thought he would be alright. "But I don't think so. I think this is all there is to life," he said and I said to him, "Do you realize, do you ever stop and think of how a Christian feels? We feel that this life is just one little speck of time compared to eternity. It's nothing, my friend, and in this little life, if you have Jesus," I told him this, "if you have Jesus, you have a joy that the world never knows but then it opens up, it opens up to be with Jesus forever. To be with him. To be married to him and to have that intimacy forever and ever in perfection, without any shortcoming. Oh, my friend, I hope that God will show you what you're missing." And he was quiet. He didn't say a word.

Who knows? Who can tell? But you know better. You know that Jesus is real. You know that his friendship is the most important thing in this world. He saves your soul and becomes your best friend, your Lord, your Savior, your treasure. Are you with him? Are you with him? This is what life is all about. You can get accolades in everything you do, you can be well esteemed at work, you can be a decent husband, decent wife, have decent kids, you could be fairly content in an outward way of life. This man said, "I've never had any trouble. Never had any trouble in my two daughters. We made it through the teen years." He even said praise the Lord for it, even though I don't know if he believes in the Lord. But it was a relief to him. He made it through the teen years.

You see, you can have everything going for you but if you don't have Jesus with you, your life is empty and it doesn't need to be that way. He's willing to be with sinners. He's approachable. This man receiveth sinners. Repent of your sin. Ask the Spirit, ask him to give you repentance. Acts 5:31, he gives repentance and forgiveness of sin. Go to him and find real meaning, real joy, real friendship to be with him now and forever. Amen.

Gracious God, we thank thee so much for the Gospel. We thank thee for the wonder that thou hast called apostles to organize and to set forth the great truths of the Christian faith, that thou hast trained them. And we pray, Lord, that our lives may be built on the chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ, and on the foundation stones of the apostolic writings of the New Testament as well as the prophetic ones of the Old, and that we would learn to be with Jesus through thy word, through prayer, through the means of grace, through preaching, through the communion of saints, through the spiritual disciplines, that we would draw close to thee, Lord Jesus, as the fruit of thy drawing close to us. Oh, do bless us and build thy church with faithful men. Guide us, lead us, show us what we must do and help us, Lord, to guide the flock in the precepts of the word of God. Bless us now we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

SUNDAY MORNING

10/15/17

Dr. Joel R. Beeke

Votum and Salutation

Psalter 251

Reading of the Law of God

Scripture Reading: Mark 3:13-19

Prayer

Psalter 421:1, 2

Sermon Text: Mark 3:13-19

(Series on Mark #22)

Jesus Ordaining the Twelve

1. *The setting*
2. *The specifics*
3. *The significance*

Psalter 421:3, 4 (standing)

Sermon Conclusion

Closing Prayer

Psalter 421:5, 6

Doxology of Praise (pg. 415)

Benediction

1. Explain the significance of the following setting in relation to Jesus' ordaining of the twelve apostles:
 - a. Historical context
 - b. Geographical location
 - c. Spiritual climate
2. Explain the significance of the following specifics in relation to Jesus' ordaining of the twelve apostles:
 - a. The Author of the choice
 - b. The results of the choice
3. Explain the significance of the following in relation to Jesus' ordaining of the twelve apostles:
 - a. That they were all males
 - b. That most of them were insignificant in themselves
 - c. That they were very diverse
 - d. That some of them became eminently useful
 - e. That one of them would betray him