

Mar 3:13-19 NKJV 13 And He 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.

We know from a few weeks ago that Christ had gone up to the mountain to pray, and then he called a bunch of his disciples up to be with him. And from those he picked the 12 disciples. We talked about the importance of this decision. Jesus future ministry on earth after His death was going to be overseen and spread through these men. Jesus had a year and one half to get these guys trained. Now, we might think, God is God. He doesn't need men. He could just as easily send angels to do this work. And that is true. But God doesn't. I don't know of a single instance where God sent an angel to explain the gospel to people. I know of instances where God used dreams or angels to direct a person to someone who could tell them the gospel. I know of places where God has directed people right to the Bible and they read the good news of salvation as a result of reading the Bible. But I don't know of anywhere that God has used an angel to explain the Gospel.

God has saved that privilege from humans. It is the job of every believer to share the gospel with everyone that they can. I don't know why. I don't know that anyone but God knows why. But that is our job. Maybe it is because Angels have never needed this message. Angels don't know what it is like to be separated from God. Fallen angels do. But God's servants do not. They don't know what it is like to commit sin, knowingly or unknowingly, because sin is in our fallen natures. And sin is something all of us as humans know a lot about. We are all in the same boat in regard to our history. Scripture says for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Remember from our study of Romans we read

Rom 3:10-12 10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."

The angels have not experienced this. But we have. We have good intentions. But we can't seem to deliver on them. There is a force in us that sabotages our good intent. We have a selfishness that goes to our core, a selfishness that tells

God- I've got this. I can handle this. I can be God of my life. I have no desire to submit to your Lordship of my life. I have no need for your Sovereign rule over my decisions and my thinking. I can handle my life my own way. Our old natures have no problem with religions. Being religious is often full of ego and pride. It gives us a chance to show how much better we are than others. Religions are fine to the man apart from God. But the man apart from God runs from a true relationship with God, true fellowship with God, true worship and service to God, just like Adam and Eve ran and hid from God after they sinned.

Why? Romans tells us.

Rom 3:10-12, 21-23 NKJV 10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." ...

The problem is not primarily what we do. The problem is what we are. We are not righteous. We are not understanding. We are in a fallen state. And in that state, we do not have the capacity to fix ourselves. Our self improvement is like patches on top of patches. Isaiah said that all of our righteousness, all of our goodness, all of our good efforts are like filthy rags. They are good for nothing of value. They can't even be used for anything good. That is what our efforts to improve ourselves are worth.

That is the description of every human who has not responded to God's call on their lives. The angels have never experienced this fallen-ness, but we have. And everyone who truly knows themselves has seen the problem. We may not have known how to **describe** the problem, but we have struggled with the **symptoms**. With all that being said, with all that bad news, it would be easy to give up. It would be easy to lose heart. It would be easy to think, all is lost. But I think God reserves the telling of the Gospel to humans because we can tell it with enthusiasm. Once it has changed us, we know for certain it can change anyone. Once it has saved us, we know it can save anyone.

I am going to use an illustration here that will seem strange. But stay with me. I have had athlete's foot in the past. I tried everything but couldn't get rid of it. Nothing on the market worked. But one day I read that soaking your feet in apple cider vinegar for 30 minutes for 5 days in a row will get rid of it. So I tried it. And sure enough it worked. It worked better than all the things I had trusted in before. So now, when I hear anyone that is having trouble with anything like this I am quick to tell them the cure. And I am very enthusiastic about it. Because if it cured me, it can cure you. And being cured is great.

Well the same is true for the Gospel but 1000 times greater. Every human is born with a sin problem. And they will try all kinds of remedies like denial, or religion, or works of benevolence, or work, or pleasure. But nothing cures the problem.

Because the problem is our sin nature that we were born with. But then Christ offers the miracle cure. And it is something that only we as humans can experience. The angels cannot. Angels will never be able to be as excited or passionate about the cure as we can be.

And what is the cure?

We also read about this in Romans.

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Here is the answer to our problem. It is not by being better. It is not by human effort of any kind. The answer comes from outside of us. It is something done **for us** that we could not do **for ourselves**. The answer is the righteousness of God being offered to us, to us who are sinners through and through. Well how can that be?

Well the amazingly good news, the good news that is more exciting to us than to angels, is that Jesus Christ paid the penalty for every sin that every one of his children will ever commit. He took the wrath of God upon Himself for our sin. That is what His death was all about. We had punishment coming. We had eternal death coming. And we fully deserved it. And Christ stepped in and said, I will take the punishment of death that you deserved, because only I can. Because I was without sin, I am thus qualified to take it in your place.

And now we find we can have this righteousness, not by working for it, not by trying hard, not by anything that comes from us. We can have this righteousness by receiving it by faith. **even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe**

That is the great and wonderful news that everyone who has come to Christ has to share. Christians are people who have nothing to be proud or arrogant about. All we have done is believe God. We have trusted what Christ has done on the cross to count for us. And even that ability is not something we drummed up. Ephesians tells us that even the faith that we display is a gift from God. Even the ability and desire to believe was given to us by God.

That is what Christ was going to leave to the Apostles care. This is the central message of their whole mission.

Have you responded to Christ's call on your life? Have you trusted Christ, and what He did on the cross, to count for you? Have you surrendered the rule of your life over to His sovereign lordship in appreciation for what He has done for you? That is Christianity 101. And there is nothing like it offered any in any other religion. Because ultimately, Christianity is not a religion. It is truly the only way

to have fellowship with God restored. Do business with this today. Don't let it drift into the many things that go undone. This is far too important for that.

Now, back to the text.

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:

We can see here a little bit about what is different from the 12 disciples and all the other followers.

The concept of apostle, or its Aramaic equivalent shaliah, was a common thing at the time of Christ. The shaliah was a representative of the Sanhedrin, the ruling counsel of the Jewish people. This position would have the full backing of the Sanhedrin. When he spoke he would speak with the authority of the Sanhedrin. But the message he delivered was not his own. He could not add to it or take away from it. He had to clearly communicate what the Sanhedrin had said.

Some prominent Rabbi's also had their own shaliah. They would send out their representatives who did their bidding as well. The Jewish Mishnah described the role of Shaliah by saying that "The one sent by the man is as the man himself."

That is what Christ was choosing. Representatives.

Now, what was different?

First- that they might be with Him. This means that from this time forward they will be full time disciples. They are going to have to rely upon Christ and the ministry for their income. If they are with Christ, they can't be fishing and vice versa. Christ is essentially making them "full time".

Notice Christ's way of discipleship. He has devoted them **to be with him**. More is caught than taught. These men are going to be with Christ 24 hours a day. They are going to watch what he does and then they will ask Him questions about what He said and what He did. They will think about His answers. And over time they will learn to be like Him.

That is the best form of discipleship. It beats the classroom by a long shot. In a classroom the teacher can talk about things that he or she has never done. A person can fail in the tests of life over and over again but act as if he or she is living successfully. Class room lives in the world of the theoretical. But life is reality. It shows our Christianity for what it really is. When Christ wanted to disciple someone, he brought them into the reality of His life. And he taught them both how to think and how to live. He taught them to obey as He obeyed.

Remember what Jesus said when He commanded us to do the same thing?

[Mat 28:19-20 NKJV] 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, [even] to the end of the age."

Christ commanded us to teach others to essentially obey the way we obey. There is no false haughtiness here. There is no- “do as I say even though you know I have never applied this to myself” here. Essentially there is no hypocrisy here. We are to teach them to obey like we are obeying.

That was Christ’s school of discipleship. This is costly. It often costs us our privacy. It is inconvenient. But it is effective.

So Christ is inviting these 12 men to share His life. That was a huge thing.

Then the next thing that was unique about the job of this 12 follows.

and that He might send them out to preach,

These 12 will be appointed to represent Christ in a preaching ministry. We can gather from this that they will be trained how to represent Christ accurately. Do you remember the word for that? Doctrine. They are going to be trained in proper doctrine. Whether the training is formal or informal doesn’t matter. What matters is, at the end of the day when they preach they are accurately representing what God says. If Christ is sending them out to preach you can rest assured that Christ will be teaching them **what to preach**.

It is interesting to note that Christ called them to the office of Apostle here, but it was several months later in Luke 9 that he actually sent them out to do the job of preaching. I think it is good for us to realize that they were not **zapped** with some kind of supernatural preaching ability that would overpower their lack of study or understanding of the Gospel. They had things to learn with their brains. They had some study to do, some thinking to do, some preparation to do, before they were ready to be sent.

Don’t ever assume that your greatest problem is due to a lack of some supernatural zapping by God. Most of our problems are due to a failure to think properly, a failure to believe the truth, and a failure to believe it. When we know the truth, it will set us free.

The Apostles were ultimately tasked with protecting the doctrine of their teacher once He was gone. Paul even took what he was teaching and put it to the apostles for approval and confirmation. Most of the writing of the New Testament, if not all of it, was overseen by the apostles, if we count Paul into that number. And that seems safe because Paul, himself, did.

[Act 2:41-43 NKJV] 41 Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added [to them]. 42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

We see here that the Disciples were in charge of the doctrine of the church. The New Testament is essentially the Apostles doctrine put into writing.

And we also see that many wonders and signs were done through them. So the disciples were set apart to be with Christ full time, they were set aside as those who would know, understand, protect and apply doctrine for the benefit of the church. And third-

15 and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons:

The apostles were to have unusual spiritual powers. If the apostles were to be convincing in preaching the message of their Master, they must also be able to display **power** like their Master. This would help people to know that the disciples truly were sent by Christ. It was important, especially during this period of time, that these leaders had some means of verification.

We find this verification of the Apostles and their ministry much like the gift of tongues was used to verify the authenticity of the gentile conversions. God does not expect blind faith. He often provides verification of authenticity for those who have a mind to see it and test it properly.

What did Christ do? Over and over we are told that he healed sicknesses and cast out demons. So it is no surprise that this is exactly the power that he eventually gave to the Apostles. Just like at Pentecost believers spoke in tongues, so that is the same sign used when other Gentiles came to Christ.

We know from other passages that the 12 also had some other differences.

[Eph 4:11-13 NKJV] 11 And He Himself gave some [to be] apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

We see from this verse that Christ gave the apostles for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry. In our day that is done by reading and studying the messages of the Apostles.

On to the next verse-

16 Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter;

Now we are going to start into the list of the 12 apostles. Simon is the first person mentioned in all the lists. In fact all of the lists name all the same people, although for a few of them, the lists use different names to refer to the same people. Just like we know Brad as Brad but his first name is really Jon. So to refer to him by either would be accurate.

Now let's take the rest of this morning to look at the man called Peter on good days and Simon on bad days.

Simon was the first name on all the lists of 12 and it is clear that he was a natural leader. He has more interactions with Christ and His name is mentioned in the New Testament more than all the others.

The lists of the apostles are in three groups of four names. The first group had probably been with Christ the longest and were the closest to Christ. Peter, James and John appear to be in Christ's inner circle. Frequently if only a few apostles are mentioned with Christ, the names are Peter James and John.

Christ, in his flesh, had limitations. He could not maintain relationships with hundreds of people. He limited his closest intimate interactions with just a few close friends. I think Christ serves as an example even in this. We don't have the capacity to have a lot of true close friends. We can only maintain a few of those relationships. Then we will have others who we are loving to and they may be loving to us, but we don't have the same depth of relationship with. And that is ok. And then as we move out, we move to people who are just acquaintances to us. There is nothing wrong with that.

The trick is figuring out how to appropriate our time to spend it where it is best used. We are wise to **be most committed and loyal to those who are the most committed and loyal to us**. And then, as we move outward we do well to spend our **ministry time** with **those who are most open to our ministry**. Sometimes that means we will be faced with hard choices. But our lives are too short to waste. It requires that we prioritize wisely if we want our lives to be well spent.

Now, Simon was a common name. There are at least 7 Simons in the New Testament. Simon's full name is Simon Bar-Jonah or Simon Son of Jonah. We know by this that Simon's dad's name was John or Jonah.

Now to this Simon, Christ gave another name. He gave him the name Peter. I don't know what Simon means. But Peter means Rock.

It is very interesting when you read the New Testament to pay attention to which name **Christ** uses for Peter, and which names the **Gospel writers** use for Peter. When Christ calls him Simon, it is usually the old Peter, the Peter that needs rebuked or corrected. But when he calls him Peter, it is the sign of a changed Peter, a Peter that is being led by the Holy Spirit, who is obeying what God says. Let's look at Luke 5

[Luk 5:5-8 NKJV] 5 But Simon answered and said to Him, "Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net." 6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking. 7 So they signaled to [their] partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 When Simon Peter saw [it], he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!"

Notice that it is **Simon** who answers Christ that we have toiled all day and caught nothing. But it is Simon Peter who falls down at Jesus' knees seeing the man that Simon truly is in relationship to Christ.

[Luk 22:31-34 NKJV] 31 And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift [you] as wheat. 32 "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to [Me], strengthen your brethren." 33 But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." 34 Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me."

Christ says to Peter, Simon Simon. This is probably to emphasize the weakness and frailty of Peter. It was the old Peter, the Simon that had a false confidence, a brashness, an arrogance that was not useful in the kingdom of God.

Then Christ refers to Peter as Peter, maybe an encouragement to be what he needed to be after the test. Or maybe to emphasize that the Rock that Peter thinks he is is not the man he truly is...yet.

Christ is letting Simon in on a secret. Simon is not Peter in his own efforts.

Simon's flesh will never create this new man, Peter the rock. Only the Holy Spirit can do what needs done here. And only walking in the Spirit will have the result of Simon actually becoming Peter.

[Jhn 21:15-17 NKJV] 15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, [son] of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs." 16 He said to him again a second time, "Simon, [son] of Jonah, do you love Me?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My sheep." 17 He said to him the third time, "Simon, [son] of Jonah, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, "Do you love Me?" And he said to Him, "Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."

Notice that Christ calls Peter Simon three times. This had to break Peter's heart. Peter had sinned by denying Christ 3 times. And here Christ is restoring him. But he is not cutting him any slack. For Peter to become what he must be, he must see himself for what he truly is. Simon, the natural leader and the arrogant person was going to do the kingdom no good. He had to get to the end of himself. He had to die to loving himself and learn to take care of his brothers and sisters.

The focus of Peter's life had to come off of himself and his abilities and his ambitions and become fixed on those things that mattered most to Christ.

This was the last time that Christ called Peter Simon. After Pentecost we see a new side of Peter.

[Act 2:14-16 NKJV] 14 But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. 15 "For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is [only] the third hour of the day. 16 "But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

Now we see the Peter that Christ was shaping and preparing. Peter had to go through a lot of hard knocks. He had to go through the crucible of his own personal failure. Everyone knew what their leader, Peter had done. The man who swore he would stand for Christ through anything denied Christ to a simple servant girl. At first I am sure it was hard for Peter to even show his face. He was embarrassed and ashamed of what he had done. He was humiliated. All of the things about himself that he was so proud of were shown to be utterly worthless. Have you ever come to that point? Have you ever had to admit that you are not the person you **thought you were** or **hoped to be**? We tend to see that as a bad thing. But in the school of Jesus it is a very good and necessary thing. Failure to be what we think we are, failure to exhibit the virtues we think we have naturally, this failure is true of everyone who is honest. But only those who are bold and truthful will ever see it. Most of us are able to keep our failures hidden because we don't live out in the open like Peter did. We can still pretend to be stalwart people. And that pretending doesn't do us or our brothers and sisters, or the kingdom of God any good. It is only when we **see ourselves** as Peter did that we can ever get to the **point of usefulness** that Peter did. It is only then that we will truly trust God like Peter did.

Christ said, apart from me you can do nothing. And it is true. It is only as we are humble that God will lift us up. It is only when we see that, in and of ourselves, we can do nothing, that God can begin to use us and get the credit for those things He will do through us.

Peter is such a wonderful example to us, not of his successes so much as his response to his failures. He gives us hope because he shows us what happens in the school of Jesus. First the illusions of our innate goodness are destroyed. Then the overwhelming goodness of Christ is displayed. And we learn that **in Christ**, and in Him alone, is where our trust must lie.

Peter had a lot of natural innate traits, but they were not useful to the kingdom until Peter learned who alone can be trusted.

Has the Lord placed you in a position where you are facing your own failure this morning? Regard it as a lesson in the school of true spirituality. Give up regarding yourself from the position of human pride. And see yourself as you truly are.

Only then can you become who you are created to be. And that will happen as you place your faith, not on your own human potential, but in the power and guidance of your creator.

