

Madness: The King's Cabinet

The King's Cabinet

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Bible Text: Matthew 4:18-20

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Today we are going to turn to a passage of Scripture to find out who, how and where Jesus called these men. And I dare say from the outset, there is not a president, a prime minister or a king or a queen anywhere on this planet who would have called these guys to do what Jesus Christ called them to do. From the very beginning today, before we turn to Matthew chapter four, please hear me clearly. God does not call the equipped. He equips the called. And if you have ever seen that phrase, "Change the world, start here" and thought, I can't do that, you are the kind of person that God wants to work through. You are the type of person, we are the type of church, where he says, "I can work with that," because when we say, "I am not able, I am not capable, I can't do it," he says, "I can work with that."

With that being said, we turn to Matthew chapter four, three very simple verses of Jesus calling whom we know as the apostles or the disciples. And, yes, there are lengthier passages, particularly in the gospel of John, but it shares with us everything we need to know. It says:

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."¹

And as I mentioned to you, these are two of the 12. These are the individuals whom Jesus Christ one day will send on and say, "Ok, guys, it is yours." These are the men who according to the book of Acts chapter 17 will see the world turned upside down. As we will see today their qualifications, their résumés, their reputations were of no sort of an earthly value.

What I want to do today is to look at these individuals, to look at this calling from the human or earthly perspective and then from the God or divine perspective. Let's look at the human perspective first. What would the world, what would the flesh, what would our carnal world say about these individuals?

The first thing it would say is there is an issue with their pedigree. You know what a pedigree is. Where you come from and whose you come from. Notice what it says here, that he was by the Sea of Galilee. If you were to study geographically what we know as the holy land and Galilee would be up north and Galilee would be on the border of Syria and Jordan and all those areas in the north. It was not the area of wealth. It was not the area of prestige. In fact, it was

¹ Mathews 4:18.

this area that Jesus grew up in and Nathaniel, another disciple called, would say, “Is there any good thing that can come from Galilee?”

In the days of Jesus they were not as mobile as you and I are. They did not have the ability to get on an airplane or get into an automobile and travel great distances. In fact the story, the Christmas story of Mary and Joseph on the donkey is, in our terminology a very short distance, but it was a laborious journey. And so whose you came from, whom you came from often is where you came from.

It was a culture in which oftentimes your parents, grandparents, great grandparents, and who knows how many lineages, would all be from the same village and the same area, and, as we are going to see in a moment, doing the same thing.

The thing about Galilee is this: If someone were to say that somebody great came from Galilee, you would say, “Excuse me?” This was not the place where celebrities were made. Israel Idol did not pull people from Galilee. This was a place in our vernacular, we would talk about “over there” or “them” or “that side.” This was the area that you would never expect something great to come from. And yet this is the area where Jesus said, “I am going to get the guys who are going to change the world.”

When I was in my collegiate days I unfortunately slipped into almost a pattern of all college students. I fell into what we call the bubble. If you don’t know what the bubble is on every college campus, every major college campus, whether it is an urban environment or a rural environment, they have created a campus environment in which everything is pretty self-sustaining. You can study there, sleep there, eat there, serve there, and go to church there. You never have to come out of the bubble, so to speak. And most universities that are aged, 100, 200 years of age, are in communities that often times have on the outskirts of that bubble what we might call degeneration, dilapidated housing, a community that has so been forgotten and been avoided and been passed by.

The university that I went to celebrated its 150th birthday while I was there and much could be said about the environment around it. I was about half-way through my college career when somebody mentioned to me that there was a restaurant in town, but it was in that part of town. There was a restaurant in town that people were scared to go to because they heard about the environment in which it was, but they heard that the food was that good. And when I heard that it was barbeque I said, “I have got to go. That is “sic-em” to a bull dog. I have got to go find this barbeque.”

This is not an endorsement or an advertisement for this place, but if you ever find yourself in central Texas, go to Jaspers. Jaspers Barbecue is the biggest hole-in-the-wall you have ever seen in your life with the best barbecue you will ever eat. Anybody who is up for a road trip, call me. Let’s go.

When I went into Jaspers for the very first time there was a cultural clash. It wasn't hard to do. Why? I was a student of the bubble. I looked like the bubble. I lived in the bubble. But I just wanted some barbecue. So my going there and the conversation with the owner of the restaurant which ensued went a little something like this.

He said, "Why are you here? Did they not tell you about the neighborhood? Did they not tell you it would be dangerous?"

I said, "They told me all that stuff, but I hear the barbecue is the best."

He said, "Yes, it is."

And it began a relationship with Jaspers that I can still taste today. My point there is that sometimes the best items, from a fleshly perspective, can be found in the worst places. And that is what happens when Jesus goes to the Sea of Galilee and he is put there by Capernaum and other areas. You understand that he picked his cabinet from the place that no earthly king would have.

I have seen in recent days that our president has begun to nominate people to fill his cabinet. And you have to listen for eight or nine minutes to hear the entire résumé. They have been there, done that and it is all this litany of everything.

If you were to go to Andrew and Peter and Nathaniel and Philip and say, "What makes you qualified to change the world?" Do you know what they would have said? "I know how to catch fish." Can you imagine putting that in front of Congress? This is going to be the new CIA director. Sir, what makes you qualified for the position? "Well, I am real good with bass." Do you get the absurdity of this? These are the men whom Jesus would change the world with. Their pedigrees are less than stellar, which leads to that second point.

Because of their pedigree there was an issue of their popularity. Let's just be honest with each other. Our world has a natural gravitation to focus on who is "in" and who is "out." Who is "in style" and who is "out of style?" And we are so awful about this popularity thing. We have magazine covers. Even on social media we like to regulate by how many followers or how many friends somebody has. And we dictate that, oh, this person must be worthy of listening to because lots of people like them. Can I remember you that lots of people listened to Adolf Hitler?

Just because you can draw a crowd doesn't mean you are worth listening to. But nonetheless these men were not popular. In fact the best way that I can describe it is this age-old game that will bring back some very haunting memories to some of you. Do you remember growing up in grade school? Do you remember going to PE class and hearing a two-word phrase that made you just shiver from your head

to your toes? Dodge ball. You remember the game, right? I don't know what brilliant educational professional came up with this idea that we are going to take eight inch rubber balls, give them to hormonal teenagers and tell them to throw them at each other as fast as they can, but we did. I don't know where you grew up, but where I grew up this is how dodge ball began. At random the PE instructor would pick two captains and they would start picking the teams. And you know how that went, don't you? The popular ones were always chosen first. The athletic ones were always chosen first. And it got down to the last four or five. And the captains would look at each other like do we even need them? I mean, all we are going to do is, you know, pick them off in the first round here. I mean, have we all not been at that dodge ball game?

Maybe it wasn't at dodge ball. Maybe it was eight seats at the cafeteria table and it was between you and somebody else and somebody else got invited to sit down. Maybe it was a party where there were only 20 spots available and 24 people wanted to go and you were one of the four who weren't chosen. We have all lived that life. Every one of us deep down inside has felt what it is like to be on the outside, to be a part of the "unpopular." This is what these guys lived with. Their entire life was watching somebody else be chosen. Their entire life was saying why won't somebody pick me? I am just a guy who fishes on the Sea of Galilee. For the rest of the country these guys were only good for providing their lunch and their dinner. Wow. These are the people that Jesus is going to change the world with.

It leads to my final human perspective. It wasn't just their pedigree. It wasn't just their lack of popularity, but it was the actual profession that they possessed.

Now we talk about them being fishermen and that is not a degradation of those who do that for a living. It is not that their profession was of low status. It is that their profession was one which they most likely inherited and most likely one they never wanted to be. Remember the pedigree. These guys are from the same geographical location. They have always been there. They have family who has been there for years and the reason they are fishermen. Remember James and John? When they left their nets, they left it with their dad who was a fisherman.

Notice that even Jesus, God in flesh, what did he do as an apprentice? He was a carpenter. Why? What was Joseph? A carpenter. That is why oftentimes, if you have ever done a study so many people have the last name that they do. Jesus of Nazareth, Simon Bar Jonah that is the relationship; but often in our cultures our names originated from the profession that our families partook of. Their dads were fishermen. Most likely their granddads were fishermen. It was fish here, fish there, fish everywhere.

It is not that being a fisherman was of low status. It is just not what they ever dreamed of. And when Jesus comes to these guys and he says, "Guys, follow me," that they do something so radical that I think you and I and the western culture

have a hard time grasping it. They drop their nets. They quit. They are done. They go.

And we look at that and we say, “Wow.” I don’t possess that. I can’t do that. That is just... these guys must be the rock stars. These guys weren’t the rock stars. These were the guys people threw rocks at. So what was in this that made it so simplistic?

Come follow me, and they are gone. Matthew the tax collector, who you know was making a good living on the side stealing from people, he ups and leaves. James and John, who owned their own business with their dad, up and leave. Andrew ups and leaves. Peter ups and leaves. Why did these guys just up and leave?

Let me tell you why, because they got the call they always wanted to get.

Let’s just be honest with ourselves for a moment. Every one of us, deep down inside, has a dream of somehow being called to or being something we never were. Let me give you an example. I have in my calendar, I have on my agenda, I have planned that tomorrow morning when I get up, I will get dressed and I will come to this campus and I will do my normal weekday duties here as the pastor of this church.

However, I wouldn’t say chance, but maybe providence, if the general manager from the Atlanta Braves called and says, “Jeff, we would like you to come to the pitcher/catcher tryout week, would you be interested?” I don’t have to pray about it. I am not coming in tomorrow. I just want you to know. It is not happening. And you know what? You have that same phone call, don’t you? Maybe what you really wanted to do in life was fill in the blank. I always wanted to take a trip there. I always wanted to do this as a profession. I always desired to do this. I wish I had had the opportunity to... fill in the blank. You all have one, right? I do. We all do. Because every one of us has some dream in our life, some hope in our life saying I wish I could do that. You know, these guys all had the same dream. These guys were all Jewish individuals. They were all faithful in the religion of Jews. They went to the synagogue. They knew the Scriptures. In fact, Andrew when he comes to Peter says, “Peter, we have found the Messiah. We found him.” Which means that they found him when they were looking for him. There was no greater dream in the life of any young Jewish boy than for a rabbi to come to them.

Think about the rabbis for a moment. These were the men who walked through the streets and everybody gawked at them. These were the men that young boys aspired to be and older men were jealous of. These were the men who were prestigious. These were the men who were powerful. These were the men who had a guaranteed income and a reputation that would be stellar. These were the men that when they would come to a young boy about his bar mitzvah age, those

who would desire to be in that profession, they would say, “Come follow me.” And do you know what their mom and dad would say? Go. Why? Because no longer are you here doing this. No longer will you have to struggle and strain. You will be one of them and not one of us. You have the opportunity to be something and to do something.

You know, Nicodemus, one of the highest ruling Jewish officials, called Jesus a rabbi in John chapter three. When Jesus, in John chapter two, goes in and turns over the table of the temple, nobody said, “Hey, why are you here? What is wrong with you?” They just said, “What is he doing?” He was a rabbi. He was called a rabbi. He was a teacher. He was a master. Now he was on the fringe and he was different and that is why everybody was trying to trick him in different areas. But do you understand that for these men who were a little bit older in age, kind of like I am with baseball, past their prime, there was no earthly rabbi on the planet who was ever going to come to Simon Peter and say, “Hey, you, follow me.” He had just been dead set that he was going to be on a fishing boat the rest of his life. And a rabbi named Jesus showed up and said, “Come follow me.” And he up and left.

You know, that is exactly the picture that God wants to paint for us. God takes nobodies and does something with them. God takes people out of the mundane and the simplicity and the repetitiveness of life and says, “I am interested in changing the world. Are you interested in doing what I tell you to do?”

Nobody would have picked these guys. Nobody would have said, “Sure, they have got the résumé. They have got the credentials.” But Jesus looked at their lives and said, “These are the guys I want.”

So what was God’s perspective? What did he see in these guys that we struggle with seeing? What did he see in you that you can’t see in you? The first thing is this. He sees possibility. Notice what verse 19 says. I will. I will means it is not there now, it has never been as of yet, but it will be one day. I was not an English major in college, but I will means the future. Jesus says, “I see the possibility in you. I see that you can become what I desire you to become, even though you don’t believe you will be anything the world says you can or should be. I will.

You know one of the things that Traci and I pray over our boys on a regular basis is we pray that they will have a teachable spirit. We pray that as they grow up that when the Lord begins to conform their life that they will receive it welcomely, because oftentimes—and adults we know this—life never ends up the way we thought it would, right? I mean, I know you are shocked. The Braves never called me. I am shocked, too. I know that. But it never ends up that way. And, by the way, if you want the statistics, only one in 750,000 Little Leaguers ever makes it to the show. But all 750,000 of them think they are going to get the call.

They all play a variety of sports. This last week in one of the sports with one of my children had an evaluation from the coach. And it is one of those evaluations where they rank the different qualities from one to five, one being substandard, two being below average, three just kind of average, four above average and five is stellar. If you were to look at the sheet that we received at our house the flesh just thinks “hmm... all right.” “Not that big a deal; it is ok.” And, well, we will just keep playing because, you know, really we realize that we are not that one. We are part of the 749,999, but it does, you know, give a good environment. And then I began to look closer at the evaluation. And it is interesting how our prayers can be answered in such odd ways. For on that list of a multitude of items, there were only two areas that received a five, only two, coachability and endurance. Isn't that what as a parent I want? I want a child who will be coachable to the finish line. And that was recognized and that is what Jesus saw in these guys. These guys were coachable. Hey, guys, it has been a long night. Go ahead and cast out in the middle of the sea. I am going to go out onto the mountain and pray. Ok, boss. Didn't argue, didn't question. Now there were times where they didn't understand everything that was going on, but Jesus saw their possibility because they were coachable. They were teachable. They were people who say, “Ok, I don't have to have all the answers. I don't have to argue about everything. I will just do what you tell me to do.” Those are the people that Jesus uses to change the world. Why? Because we often get into it thinking I know how to change the world for better and we messed it all up. It is this possibility I will mess it up.

The second thing he saw in them that he wants to see in you is what I call progress. You say, “What do you mean, progress?” Look at verse 19. I will make you. That means that we have got to go through a process of progress to take them from where they are now to where they need to be.

You know there is imagery used in the Bible, in particular Jeremiah chapter two and Romans chapter nine where the Lord calls himself a potter and we are the clay. Now that is not just some random illustration used for Israel and for the Church. That is an illustration that is rooted in the first two chapters of the Bible. For when the Lord established humanity, what did he do with Adam? He took red clay and dirt and he formed and he fashioned him according to Genesis one in his image. His desire, with our willingness the possibilities, is to make progress in our life so that we become more like him. Jesus Christ changed the world. And Christian means follower of Christ. We are capable of changing the world if we become more like him.

Now here is how this progress works. If you have never had the privilege, if you have never witnessed a potter on the wheel, allow me to share this illustration. Not only have I seen it, but I have actually been behind the wheel. It is a fascinating illustration that the Lord gives us because potters do not just throw the clay on there, start massing and moving it, boom, there is the perfect pot. That is not how it works. What happens is often times whatever they desire to create, let's

just say they get about 30 to 40 percent through and they realize that something is not right. Maybe the walls are too thick or too thin. Maybe the clay is not the way it needs to be. Do you know what potters do? They take the clay. They smash it back down onto the wheel and they build it back up again. Now it hits about 60 or 70 percent the way they want it to be, but if they keep doing it that way that it is doing it is not going to be pretty. Why? Because maybe it is warped. And if it is warped just a little bit by the time they get finished with either in the kiln or on the wheel it is going to blow up or smash to pieces. And so they take it even at 60 to 70 percent full and they will smash it back down onto the wheel and they will raise it back up again. Why? Because as that progress is taking place, they are beginning to see the imperfections. They are beginning to see the problems and the potter realizes that if the problems are allowed to remain the end result will not look like it is supposed to look.

Let me ask you a question. Have you ever had one of those moments when you felt like God just took your life and smashed it back onto the wheel? And you said, "Why did that happen? Why was this allowed? This occurrence in life? I mean, God, things were going great so I thought and then, bam, this happens." Do you know why that happened? Because he wants to build you up greater than you were." And the only way for that progress to happen is to be smashed into the wheel. And I know that is a crude illustration, but that is how it works, because the goal is the product. See, he sees our possibility. He wants to make progress in our life. But here is his goal. Are you ready? It is a product. What does he say in verse 19? I will make you fishers of an institution? An organization? Men.

Do you know that the entire reason that the Lord works and moves and massages our life to look like him is he has one goal. It is for your life to be a magnet for mankind.

Now when I use the word men, understand, that is not gender exclusive, ladies. That means men and women. His desire is to reach people through people.

There is an old prayer warrior of days gone by the name of E. M. Bounds. He says, "You know, men are always looking for better methods. God is always looking for better men."

We always come up with these ideas as to how we could do this, we could do that. Maybe that would be more attractive, more crowds, whatever it may be. Jesus says, "No, no, no. Here is the deal." If you will just allow me to make you look more like me, you will produce men.

I want you to think about the ministry of Jesus for a moment. Everywhere he went the crowds thronged to him. The feeding of the 5000, that is just the men. There were probably 20,000 plus. At the Sermon on the Mount there was a multitude. In fact, there were times that he was so "popular" - and I use that word not in an earthly sense - that a group of men cut a hole in a roof to get another guy down.

You hear this possibility. You hear the drawing of men and you are thinking to yourself, you know, I hear that, but I just don't think God can do that with me.

Let me run you through a list of characters in the Bible and share with you how you are wrong. There was a man by the name of Moses, a murderer who had been out in the desert for 40 years, though everybody in Egypt had forgotten his name. And one day he comes across a bush that is burning and God says, "I want you to go and deliver my people."

There is a young man whose brothers are all off to battle. He is on the back side of nowhere with a bunch of stinky sheep and God comes and says, "I want you to be my king."

He comes to a loud-mouthed fisherman by the name of Peter and says, "I want you to be a rock." He comes to a religious zealot, a blind man by the name of Saul, and says, "I want you to pen half the New Testament."

Do you see where all these guys started? And do you see where they all ended? What God sees is so different than what man sees. And these are the people he changed the world with.

Which leads to this final thought. We have looked at man's perspective or human's perspective. We have looked at God's perspective. So what needs to be your perspective? This is your takeaway today. This is what you deal with at the time of invitation. What should your perspective be? And you need to first realize your lack of reality. We live in a world that is dominated by how many followers on Twitter, friends on Facebook and covers on magazines somebody has. Let's be honest with ourselves. Most likely a movie is not going to be made about our lives. Most likely biographies will not be written. One day, Lord willing, if Jesus Christ does not return in the next 100 years, you and I will soon be forgotten and the only memory of us will be a nine digit code in the annals of American history with a couple of dashes.

You do realize that with our best efforts, energies and stuff, we will never become one of them. And we need to realize that. Why? Because the more time we spend trying to be more like the world, the less time the Lord has to work on our lives. We need to realize our unreality. And then we need to repent. We need to acknowledge that only he can make us who we need to be. Only he can form us who we need to be. Only he can shape us into the image that we need to become...