

The Qualifying Round

Galilean Ministry Part 17

Mark 3:16-19 (Luke 6:12-16) 3/17/2018

Summary: The Twelve are presented in a negative way because the original readers only knew them as legends and great leaders. Mark wanted to show the awesome transforming power of Christ, who does not call the qualified, but qualifies the called.

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Mark 3:13 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles-- that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons.

16 These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); 17 James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Introduction

Qualification

If you have looked for a job recently, you're acutely aware of the fact that employers are looking for highly qualified people. And the more important the position, the higher the qualifications. If you want to pastor a church, you pretty much have to walk on water. In fact, Jesus wouldn't be qualified to pastor a lot of churches, since he didn't have a degree.

Churches don't find many people to be qualified, but they find a lot of people to be unqualified. The congregation at North Hampton Church found Jonathan Edwards unfit for ministry and fired him after 10 years. The vote was 10 to 1 against Edwards. They were absolutely certain that one of the greatest theologians and preachers of that century was unfit to be their pastor. John Calvin was found unfit to even live in Geneva. They ran him out of town. I know people who don't know of a single pastor who is qualified. Whoever you mention – MacArthur, Piper, Sproul – all of them are unqualified. The Corinthian church found the Apostle Paul unfit.

How many of you have been found unfit by an employer or potential employer? Some of us have been found to be unfit not only by employers, but by friends and even family. Unfit to be included in someone's clique. Unfit to be someone's friend, or to have a place in their life. Unfit to even be on someone's Facebook friends list! What is there in life that's less significant than being a Facebook friend, and yet some of us aren't even qualified to be one of the 500 names on someone's FB list.

One thing that comes very naturally to us is spotting disqualifying flaws in people. Some people are professionals at that. They find disqualifying flaws in everyone. That's a horrible way to live because you end up alienated from everyone.

Although, if you're an employer, you really have to be alert to disqualifying flaws in people, because you need good help if you're going to stay in business. My boss was telling me just the other day how hard it is to find people who can do my job, which is such a simple job you can be fully trained in one week. Imagine you were the hiring manager tasked with finding qualified applicants for the position of Apostle. Someone who could be trusted, after Jesus leaves the earth, with the task of taking a teaching that has been utterly rejected, and propagate it around the whole world, and to develop and oversee an organization that would persist for thousands of years and continue to grow in strength until the Second Coming. Oh, and in their spare time, to write the Bible too. That's the job description, and the work environment involves persecution, imprisonment, and torture, and the retirement plan is to be martyred. You have to fill 12 openings. What kind of qualifications would you look for?

That was Jesus' task that day up on that mountain. He climbed up there, gets down on his knees, starts crying out to the Father in prayer, the whole night goes by, sun comes up, Jesus gets up off the ground, summons his disciples, and out of the crowd he starts calling some names. "Simon – come forward. Where's your brother? Andrew, come up here. James and John. Philip..." etc.

How did it work out? These 12 men are the greatest success story ever. At the beginning of Acts there are a few Christians huddled together in a room. Now 2000 years later there are millions of Christians all around the world devoting our lives to following every word these men wrote. Skip ahead to Revelation and you see a vast multitude that no one could count from every tribe and tongue standing before the throne of God worshipping him... - all through the ministry of these 12 men. How did that happen?

We left off last time with Mark telling us in vv.14,15 what Jesus' purposes were in appointing the Twelve. Then, starting in v.16, he gives us the list of their names. Twenty years ago I did a five part sermon series summarizing everything Scripture says about each of these men. I'm not going to do that now, because I want to keep the focus on Mark's message, and the things he wants us to know about the Twelve.

Simon, the Archetypal Christian

And the first thing that stands out is the primacy of Peter and his name change. The Twelve Apostles are listed four times in the Bible,¹ and the order of the names varies, but Peter is always first,² and Judas is

¹ Mt.10:2-4, Mk.3:16-19, Lk.6:14-16, Acts 1:13,26.

² Matthew explicitly states that Peter was "first" (chief) among the Twelve (Mt.10:12). Mark doesn't use the word "first," but he does draw attention to Peter in that he does not list Peter's name the same way grammatically as the others. Every name but Peter's is an accusative of apposition: "He appointed the twelve, namely, ... James ... John ... Andrew, etc." But for Peter, it's not in apposition; he just gives us a little sentence about Jesus renaming him. Literally it's: **He appointed twelve. And he**

always last. There are three groups. Group one always has the same four names. Group two always has the same four. Group three always has the same four. The order changes within their group but they're always in the same group. And the first name in each group is always the same. Peter is always first in group 1, Philip in group 2, and James (son of Alpheus) in group 3. They seem to be the leaders or the predominant men in each group.

And Peter emerged, not just as the leader of the first group, but the leader of the Twelve.³ And in many ways, Peter stood for the whole group. He spoke for the whole group, was rebuked for the whole group, and represented the whole group.⁴ And he represented them, not only as Apostles, but also as disciples, which means Peter appears in Scripture as a representative, not only for the Twelve, but for all Christians.

And I think that explains why we see his name so often in Scripture. We know more about Peter than all the other 11 put together. In fact, did you know that Peter's name is mentioned more often than any other person in the NT except Jesus himself? The Holy Spirit definitely wants us to know about this man.

Not for Example

Why? Is it because Peter's life is so exemplary that God gives us a lot of detail about him so we can follow his example? We know that's the case for Paul. But I don't think that's the main purpose of the information about Peter – mainly because most of the information we have about Peter is negative. He does some terrible things. Peter is rebuked more harshly by Jesus than any other disciple, and he's the only disciple to rebuke Jesus. He actually tries to prevent Jesus from going to the cross, and Jesus ends up calling him Satan. That's not a great example.

Peter was also a coward. His cowardice led him to publicly swear that he didn't know Christ 3 times. That's the worst example there is. Then, after Jesus restored him from that, his cowardice re-emerged in Galatians 2 where he was afraid of the men from James and ended up falling into error that led others astray, including Barnabas. So Paul had to rebuke Peter to his face.

Peter has the distinction of being the only man in history personally rebuked by both Jesus and the Apostle Paul. Then in Acts 10:15 Peter is rebuked directly by God after Peter told God "no" when God gave him a direct command.

Peter was cowardly, argumentative, stubborn, rash, impetuous, prideful, foolish, spoke without thinking, had his mind on the things of man instead of God, was disobedient, slow to understand what Jesus taught. He was a walking bundle of habitual failure.

By any standard, I think the one thing you can say about Peter is he definitely wasn't qualified for leadership in the church (or anywhere else). If you look at the list of qualifications in 1 Tim.3 for an elder. Above reproach? No. Temperate? No. Not violent but gentle? He cut off Malcus' ear with a sword. Not quarrelsome? He argued with Jesus and God the Father. Not a recent convert, or he may become conceited? He was a recent convert and did become conceited. Good reputation, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap? His failure and sin and denial of Christ is one of the most well known facts of history. Terrible reputation and he did fall into disgrace and the devil's trap. He was about as unqualified as they come.

gave the name to Simon: Peter. In the NIV, it looks like Simon is the first in the list. But grammatically, Mark doesn't really put Simon in the list, he just tells us about this renaming.

³ Peter's leadership among the Twelve can be seen in passages like **Matthew 26:35 Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you."** **And all the other disciples said the same.**

John 21:3 "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We will go with you."

In the first half of Acts, Peter is clearly the chief leader of the church.

⁴ Some examples: In Mk.7:17 it says "his disciples" asked about the parable. In Mt.15:15 we find that it was Peter who asked. In Mt.21:20 the disciples ask about the fig-tree, and in Mk.11:21 it's Peter. In Mk.5:30 his disciples answered Jesus' question, and in Lk.8:45 it was Peter who answered. In Mt.26:40 all the disciples were rebuked for sleeping, but in Mk.14:37 we see that rebuke was directed specifically at Peter.

So all that to say I don't think the information about Peter is given for us as an example of holy living. The reason Peter dominates the pages of Scripture is not so we can follow his example, but so we can learn from how Jesus dealt with Peter. And, in many ways, that's true of all twelve of them. It's to show us how Jesus deals with unqualified people.

The Heroes' Beginnings

And that's why it's so important that we see their failures. When you read Mark, you need to keep in mind who the book of Mark was written to. It was written to people who only knew the Apostles as great men. For you and me, we are first introduced to the Twelve in the gospels, before they were trained. But Mark was written about 40 years after Jesus' death. So the readers were people who had only ever known the Apostles as spiritual giants. The Apostles who were still alive were old men, who had led the church as Apostles for decades. These people had seen the Apostles' signs and wonders, they had seen the spiritual maturity, the leadership, heard their preaching – these were the greatest men they knew. They would have been in awe of these men. Whatever spiritual leaders you are most impressed with in the church today, or in church history – the reformers, Spurgeon, Moody, Augustine, whoever – they were all bumbler compared to the Apostles at the time Mark was written.

That was the only perspective the people had of the Apostles. So the gospel writers, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, write and say, "You're not going to believe what these guys were like when Jesus first called them." And you read about 12 klutzes who, many times they seemed like lost causes. For a long time, even the powerful teaching of Jesus couldn't seem to penetrate their hearts. So we're back to Doug's question from a few weeks ago – what made the change?

The Renaming of Peter

We could answer that a number of ways, but since we're studying Mark, let's look at where he points us. Look back at v.17. The very first thing Mark wants us to know is about the renaming of Simon.⁵ He tells us that before he even mentions Simon's name. Literally it's: **He appointed twelve. And he gave the name to Simon: Peter.**⁶ Jesus gave Simon a new name. And it happened back when Jesus first met Peter.

John 1:41 The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are SIMON son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

Cephas is an Aramaic name, meaning "rock." The Greek word for rock is *petros* – Peter. But that was not a name. There is no record of anyone prior to this ever being named Peter. Peter was just the normal Greek word for "rock." If some kids were throwing rocks into a lake, they were throwing peters into the lake. It wasn't a name. However, after the life of this man, "Rock" became a name, and lots of Christian parents started naming their kids Peter.

So Jesus meets Peter and immediately gives him a new name. Normally when you meet someone for the first time, you give them your name, not their name. Jesus did it the other way. "Hello, pleased to meet you. Your name is Rocky." "Uh, no, actually it's Simon." "It used to be Simon; now it's Rocky. From now on, you're the Rock." "That's Dwayne Johnson." "No, it's you. The Rock. That's your new name – get used to it."

⁵ This is highlighted even more in the Greek. The other 11 names are all listed in the same grammatic format, but he doesn't even really list Peter's name. He just tells us about the name change.

⁶ Jesus gives a nickname to James and John, but this isn't a nickname. Throughout the Gospel they are always still referred to as James and John, never by the nickname.

Gentile Form

And the interesting thing is that it's the Gentile form that caught on. The Jewish way of saying "rock" is Cephas. And that was a known name at the time. The Greek form wasn't a name. But it's that Greek form rather than the Jewish form that caught on. 96 times in the Gospels we see Peter, and only one time Cephas. In Acts it's Peter 71 times and never Cephas. And when he introduces himself in 1 and 2 Peter, he calls himself Peter.⁷

So all that to say, the leader of the Twelve ends up with a gentile name. His old name was a very Jewish name. In fact, the name Simon happens to be the most common Jewish name that was in existence in Jesus' time that archeologists and historians have found. And that's fitting, because Simon was as Jewish as they come (he had never in his life violated a kosher food law, would never dream of eating with a Gentile – he was a very strict Jew. One time God himself spoke from heaven and told Peter to eat some Gentile food and Peter just flat out said no). But after meeting Jesus, he ends up with a Gentile word for his new name. Jesus is establishing the foundations for the new, restored nation of Israel, and the lead guy in that foundation is a Jew who gets a Gentile name. What does that say about this new Israel that God is forming? Is this an indication that Gentiles are going to play a much bigger role in restored Israel than anyone ever imagined? We'll see as the story unfolds.

The Qualifying of Peter

So what happened with this prideful, arguing, foolish, cowardly, failure factory? Is everything recorded about him negative? No. He did some great things. Peter walked on water. Granted, he wasn't very good at it, but still, he's the only person in human history to ever do that except Jesus. Simon did become a rock. When the people who murdered Jesus commanded Peter to stop preaching, and they scourged him just to make the point, he prayed for courage and then went out and preached some more. They threw him in prison and God busted him out, and Peter was right back to it. He couldn't be stopped. Not by the chief priests, not by the Roman Empire, not by Satan himself. Church tradition says he died by crucifixion after they made him watch his wife being crucified. He kept telling her to remember the Lord, and then when it was his turn, he asked to be crucified upside down because he wasn't worthy to die like his Lord. He was a rock.

He was one of Jesus' inner three. He was given the keys to the kingdom, he received divine revelation, he was the leader not only of the Twelve most important men in human history, but the leader of the whole NT church. He wrote two books of the Bible and provided the content for a third. And he has his name on one of the foundations stones of the New Jerusalem and will sit on a throne reigning over the tribes of Israel for all eternity.

What happened? How did such an unqualified man end up being one of the greatest leaders ever? Answer: It's not the story of Peter. It's the story of Jesus. When Jesus changed Simon's name to Rock on the day he met him, that was a prophecy of what Jesus planned to do for Peter. Jesus transformed him. He transformed him from Simon the coward to Rocky the Strong.

Why did Jesus call such an unqualified man? Because Jesus doesn't call the qualified; he qualifies the called. Any fool can spot disqualifying flaws in people, and most fools do. But what good is that? Jesus didn't go around pointing out flaws; he went about fixing them.

Painful

But he didn't do it by just snapping his fingers and making an instant change. It happened over many, many years of painful, hard, excruciating lessons and failures.

⁷ Paul is an exception. For some reason Paul prefers Cephas over 444 Peter.

Peter's Lessons

What did Peter need to learn in order to be qualified as a leader? First and foremost, he needed to learn courage, because he was a coward. In fact, Jesus called all 12 of them cowards in 4:40, and he had to teach them how to overcome fear of threatening circumstances through trust in him. He needed to learn restraint, because he was impulsive and impetuous, so Jesus taught him about that at his arrest. He needed to learn humility, because he thought he was above serious failure. So Jesus had to let Peter fall ... hard. You see Peter after Jesus looked at him and he heard the cock crow, and he's out there weeping bitterly, and you see, these are not easy lessons. He needed to learn faith, forgiveness, tact, and trust. And if you watch all those times when Jesus pulls Peter aside and deals with him individually, he's teaching Peter those very lessons. And then you see Peter teaching us those same lessons in 1 and 2 Peter.

Mark doesn't give a lot of detail about the individuals; he mostly just talks about the group as a whole (even in situations where the other gospels tell us that it was one particular disciple). And one thing he emphasizes about the Twelve is how all twelve of them were way too slow to understand what Jesus was teaching. And we'll see Jesus get emotionally upset more than once with that, because it wasn't anything to do with their intelligence or education. It was all about their hearts. They were slow to understand because their hearts were hard. There were certain truths that were not hard to understand, but they were hard to accept, because they were hard to reconcile with other things they knew. One of the biggest things that prevents people from understanding Scripture like they should is when they read something that doesn't seem to fit with something else, they just adjust it to make it fit. Or they ignore it altogether, which is what the Twelve did. They didn't understand about the loaves and fishes because their hearts were hard (6:52). They didn't understand what Jesus said about the kosher rules because they were dull (7:18). They didn't understand Jesus' warnings about the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod because their hearts were hardened (8:14-17). Jesus tells them in very plain language that he will suffer and die and rise from the dead, and they don't get it (8:31-32, 9:10, 31-32, 10:33-37). So Jesus had to rebuke them, but he didn't give up on them. He just kept teaching. In fact, he made teaching them a priority above the needs of the people (7:24,27, 9:30-31).

Christ Our Tutor

That is one of the biggest themes in Mark. Part of the glory of Christ is the fact that he is our teacher – our tutor. The word “disciple” means “learner.” So the most fundamental way that we approach the Lord Jesus Christ is as our tutor. We learned that when we were studying Sabbath rest – remember? Jesus said, “Come to me and learn from me and you will find rest for your souls.”

Lessons for the Twelve

That's a beautiful image, but the fine print is that coming to him and learning from him can be excruciating. The disciples were prideful men who wanted fame and power and glory. And so Jesus had to teach them about humility and true greatness in ch.9 and 10. Learning humility when you're prideful is never a fun day at school. Peter said, “I'll never deny you,” and Jesus said, “You'll do it tonight – 3 times.” And Peter wasn't the only one who had to learn humility. They all did. Especially James and John. In ch.10, right before they enter Jerusalem, he shares with them all these horrible things that are just about to happen to him. He says, I'm going to be betrayed. I'm going to be handed over to the Gentiles to be killed. Guys, they are going to mock me and spit me and flog me and kill me. And James and John are like, “Uh, yeah, whatever – anyway, we have a favor to ask. We want to be exalted to the top two spots in the kingdom.” Jesus took the opportunity to teach them that by seeking exaltation they were asking for suffering, which they were going to get.

In ch.6 Jesus taught them how to balance hard work and rest and about how to trust him for provision. He taught them about ritualism in ch.7, he had to teach them to pray in ch.9, how to be watchful and alert against sin in ch.14. He had to change their attitudes about divorce (10:10), the

importance of children (10:13-14), the dangers of wealth (10:23-27), suffering (10:38-41), giving (12:43-44), faith, and forgiveness (11:12-14, 21-25). He taught them to look for their reward in the Church in ch.10. He warned them about how to avoid being deceived in the last days in ch.13.

So what we see is that Jesus is not only recreating Israel on new foundations; he is recreating the very men he is using as foundations. Because God doesn't call the qualified; he qualifies the called.

Personalities

And if you can't really relate very well to Peter because your personality is so different from his, just study the other eleven. One thing I discovered when I did that 5-part series was that when Jesus called these twelve, he covered every base with regard to personality types. You would think that if he's picking twelve men to be the leaders of the world-wide church, he would pick twelve leadership types. Twelve Peters. He didn't do that. He chose Peter, but he also chose Peter's brother Andrew, who was nothing like Peter. Andrew was a background guy. He was the first one to come to Jesus. And the first thing he did was go get his brother, Peter, and from that moment on, who is the leader of the group? Peter. Where is Andrew? Is he at least in the inner three? No. It's Peter, James, and John – then Andrew. He's never the one out there blazing a trail, making things happen. He's quiet, behind the scenes.

James and John

James and John were also brothers. Jesus nicknames them **sons of thunder**. They were fireballs. Jesus passed through a Samaritan village that didn't welcome Him.

Luke 9:54 When the disciples James and John saw' this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?"

Great missionary heart. These people are in the way; shouldn't we just burn them to a crisp?

It's no surprise that 14 years into the book of Acts and James is already dead. Herod cut his head off.

John was also a thunderous man, but Jesus changed him, didn't he? John became the Apostle of love. He writes about love constantly in his books. And he loved Jesus. John was closer to Jesus than anyone else. He is called the Apostle whom Jesus loved. And when it came time to pass on the duties when Jesus was dying to Peter He said, "Feed My sheep" but to John He said, "Take care of My mother."

The fascinating thing about James and John is the different ways the Lord used them. God used John by *changing* his characteristics, and he used James by *channeling* them. James was the first to be martyred; John was the only one of the twelve who wasn't martyred. But he was exiled to an island and lived to be an old man. Banished, where he was of no use to anyone, right? Oh, except that he did jot down a little booklet you may have heard of – the book of Revelation. John he ended up writing more of the NT than any of the 12.

Philip

Then there's Philip – the bean counter who had all the calculations to prove to Jesus that it was impossible to feed the 5000 (Jn.6:5-7). Analytical, pragmatic – a man of common sense and calculation. He couldn't see past the natural. The night before Jesus died, and Philip is still confused about Jesus' deity.

John 14:8 Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time?

Not the sharpest knife in the drawer when it came to spiritual understanding.

Bartholomew

Next is Bartholomew, whose first name was Nathaniel. Nathaniel had a really bad attitude about people from Nazareth. He had a prejudice problem.

Matthew

We already studied about how unqualified Matthew, the tax collector was. He's definitely the black sheep of the twelve.

Thomas

Next is Thomas, the doubter. For some people, like Nathaniel, faith comes easy. The first time Jesus did a miracle, Nathaniel instantly believed and never had another question. But some of us are more like Thomas. We're skeptical, questioning, doubtful, pessimistic.

In John 10 Jesus wants to go to Bethany, and Thomas says, "Let's go, that we might die with him." You have to like his courage. That's the thing about pessimists, they need a lot of courage to do anything, because they are so sure it will be a disaster. The night before he died Jesus gives those beautiful promises in Jn.14.

John 14:1 Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

That is one of the most comforting, wonderful statements imaginable. Not even the average pessimist could find a problem with that promise. But Thomas is not just an average pessimist.

5 We don't know where you are going - how can we know the way?

Jesus promises heavenly dwellings and Thomas is worried he'll never find it. He's like Eeyore on Winnie the Pooh.

The next day they crucified Jesus. And Thomas was saying, "I knew it! I knew this would end in disaster." And he's so dejected that when all the Apostles were gathered... – and the resurrected Jesus appears to them – Thomas just...wasn't there. He's off alone somewhere. So they go find him: "Hey Thomas, we've seen the Lord!"

John 20:25 ...But he said to them. "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

Thomas needed proof. So what did Jesus do? He gave him the proof he needed. And Thomas fell down and worshipped.

James Son of Alpheus

We don't know anything about him. He's a nobody. Although he does emerge as the leader of his group – and will sit on a throne and rule the tribes of Israel for all eternity. Jesus uses nobodies. Aren't you glad Jesus isn't dependent on celebrities?

Thaddeus

Next is Thaddeus (also known as Judas, son of James). We don't know a whole lot about Thaddeus. He is mentioned in Jn.14:22, where he asks a really insightful question about why Jesus was revealing Himself to the 12 and not to the whole world. He seems to have been a thinker.

Simon the Zealot

The word zeal, in Scripture, refers to the quality of a person who gets angry at those who dishonor God, and they do something about it. The great illustration of a zealot in the OT is Phinehas, who found a man and a woman committing sin together, and put his spear through both of them. Pinned them to the ground. It was an adulterer-kibob. He's the original zealot. In the NT the word "zeal" took on a revolutionary flavor. Although - I always thought zealots spent all their time trying to fight against Rome, but the zealots didn't really attack Romans. They attacked Jews who wanted to compromise in some way with Rome. If you were a Jew and you compromised with Rome in any way, the zealots would come after you. And they were ruthless. The zealots would publicly torture and murder Jews who compromised with Rome.

We don't know if Simon was more of an OT type, or more of a political type, but one thing is for sure – he would have had to have taken some pretty extreme action against people in order to get that nickname – Simon the Zealot. How do you think Simon the Zealot felt about Jesus calling Matthew – a Jew who collected taxes for Herod? If Simon would have gotten this close to Matthew before this he would have probably stuck a knife in him.

What kind of people does God tend to use? He uses quite people like Andrew, and He uses loud ones like James and John. And some of them he uses by changing their characteristics; others he uses by channeling them. He uses people when they are crazy, energetic teenagers – full of zeal and tireless – but lacking in life experience, and he uses people when they are old, tired, secluded on an island - forgotten by most people, but still important in the kingdom of God. He uses optimists who believe immediately like John and Nathaniel, and cynical pessimists who doubt everything and assume the worst like Thomas. He uses engineer types without a lot of people skills like Philip, people who have ruined their lives like Matthew, he uses nobodies like James, and thinkers like Thaddeus. That's the group Jesus used to turn the world upside down.

Why are we told so many negative things about the Apostles, because it's not the story of the Twelve; it's the story of Jesus and his awesome creative, restorative, sanctifying, renewing, recreating power. It's the story of the one who is so powerful that he does not call the qualified; he qualifies the called.

The Work of the Church

And by the way, if the church is Christ's body, then we should be doing that same work. Instead of finding people's flaws and pushing them aside, we should be busy qualifying the called.

Galatians 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

That word restore is *katarizo*. It means to repair, restore, fix, mend, make fit. You see someone disqualified? Roll up your sleeves and qualify him gently.

But that's a whole other sermon. The focus tonight is on the sanctifying work of Christ. This is how you deal with your failures and inadequacies. Come to the Christ who qualifies the called. And this is how you handle the most painful, excruciating ordeals of life. Realize that it is Jesus, re-creating you to be what he has in mind for you to be.

Our Role in Sanctification

Now, if Jesus is doing all that, what's our role? Do we just sit back and let it happen, or do we play some role in making it happen? There's one more name on the list, isn't there? **Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.**

Judas is always named last, and always with a comment. He betrayed Jesus. Why? He fell in love with money. The mention of the betrayal here in Mark is yet another clue about that third leg of the gospel – Jesus will suffer and die. The formation of this new nation will involve Jesus' death.

But it also teaches us something about discipleship. Is Judas an example of Jesus failing in the work of transforming people? No. It wasn't a failure on Jesus' part. The first 11 names show us Jesus' unlimited power to transform and use absolutely any personality type, and overcome any amount of failure and sin. But the last name in the list shows us that we play a role in accepting or rejecting the work Jesus is doing. With Judas we learn the crucial truth that Christ is either a sure foundation or a stone of stumbling. And it is our responsibility to know him as the former, not the latter. That's why we are so often warned to keep our hearts soft and receptive to whatever Jesus is teaching you, no matter how painful the lesson.

Conclusion

It used to be that when a person became a Christian, he or she would be given a new name at their baptism, and that was their name from then on. There is still a remnant of that tradition in churches that do infant baptism, when they ask the parents, "What is the child's Christian name?" They don't actually change the child's name, but asking that way is an artifact of that old tradition. I think that tradition wasn't a bad idea. Can you imagine, if all your life you've been George, and then one day now you're Paul? Every time someone said your name, you'd be reminded that you're being made into a new person.

Jesus did that literally with Peter, but in a very real sense that's what he's doing with every one of us. If you are in Christ you are a new creation, and you are progressively being made into what he has in mind for you. You're moving more and more into your new, true identity.

Have you ever wondered why Scripture speaks of believers as being so holy and righteous all the time? When you read about how Christians have forsaken sin, and we follow Christ, and we fear God and not men, etc. – it can leave you wondering if you're even saved. Romans 7, where he says, "I keep doing the things I don't want to do, and what I want to do I keep failing to do..." – we can all relate to that. But that's one chapter in the whole NT that talks like that. Why can we all identify so much with that one chapter, but not all the rest of the chapters that talk about our holiness?

It's because when God talks about us, he talks mainly about what he's making us. Where we are headed is more significant in his mind than where we are right now. We talk about President George Washington, even though most of his life he wasn't President. We identify him that way because that's where he ended up, and that was his greatest point of significance. That's the way God thinks about us.

When he called you, he renamed you. In Rev.2:17 we find out what our new name is. But from now until then, Jesus Christ is making you into that new identity.

And just like with Peter and the others, it's a slow, painful, excruciating process. But when we understand this purpose, we really can consider it pure joy when we go through painful trouble and hardship and even failure.