

## **Sermon 23: Luke 6:12-16: The Twelve Apostles**

### **OUTLINE**

Peter  
Andrew  
James and John

### **INTRODUCTION**

God's ways are not our ways, and that is especially true when it comes to ministry. God uses all sorts of people that we would not expect. When you choose a president or prime minister you are looking for someone with an impeccable record, not so in the Bible. Where we have a winning formula for a leader, that type A personality that we think is the perfect recipe for success God uses different ingredients. This is very evident as we come to that part of the gospels where Jesus chooses His twelve apostles in Luke 6:12-16. Picture the scene: the Pharisees have had run in after run in with Christ and are now on the prowl to put Him down. Jesus knows that He will die, He has already spoken about the Bridegroom having to depart, 5:35. What do you do? Jesus prepares for the propagation of His work after He leaves through the calling of 12 apostles. There is only about 3 ½ years for the apostles to be taught and trained at the feet of Christ, this calling of the 12 sets the ball in motion. But who do you choose to write a bible and build a Church to last for thousands of years and to take the message of salvation to the ends of the earth? We would scour the universities and the battlefields and the arenas and the major metropolises of the times looking for the best in every area ensuring the perfectly balanced mix.

Look at the group He chooses, at least four of them are fishermen, so much for balance and diversity. They are all of the hated Jewish race. All but one come from Galilee. You have a former sympathiser with the Roman establishment, the tax collector Matthew mixed in with a former revolutionary against the Roman system Simon the Zealot. None would be rich, well-educated or people of power and persuasion. And as we journey with them through the gospels we see that they are often ignorant and in need of instruction not understanding the clearest teachings and saying of Jesus. They are proud and argue about who will be the greatest. They are full of doubts despite the ubiquitous miracles of Jesus ministry, and in the end they turn out to be cowards who abandon their post.

The function of an apostle is very important in the church, but already we can be ministered to by them in the fact that God uses sinners, God uses a few and God uses the weak. 1 Cor. 1:26-29, 'For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.' As we go through this list of men this is one of the things you can take away with you. God takes broken things, sinful things, weak things, ignorant, doubting and despised things and uses them to impact eternity. After Pentecost when Peter and John are confronted by the leaders for healing, they bear testimony and notice the change that Jesus has made in these men, Acts 4:13, 'Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.'

Let us note a few things before we spend the bulk of our time looking in a survey fashion at each apostle mentioned.

V12, 'In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.' First off we must see the importance placed on this event by Christ praying all night before the apostles are chosen. Those words, 'all night He continued' is one word in the Greek and it is a *hapax legomena*, in other words it only occurs once in the NT here. This highlights it as an important event. Luke emphasizes the prayer life of Christ because being fully human He like us is dependent upon the Father. Since the Son was so committed to the Father in this matter of appointing apostles we must take the matter of appointing leaders to be a serious matter. We are no longer appointing apostles but in Acts 14:23 we see Paul and Barnabas setting aside elders with prayer and fasting. Prayer ensures that we are humble and dependent upon God, prolonged periods of prayer ensure proper reflection and that we do not rush what appears to us to be an obvious candidate into a position they should not be in. In prayer we are reminded of God's will and values and reevaluate our first impression in lights of God's will. Not only are we to pray in choosing our leaders but in supporting our leaders as well. Men are weak and God is strong, and prayer is how we God has appointed we obtain His strength to be present in our weakness

V13, 'And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles.' The next thing we notice is that from among the disciples Jesus called the twelve to be apostles. In other words, even though we like to talk about all Christians being sent ones or apostles, it is not true that all disciples are apostles. We must guard the uniqueness of the office of apostle for to forget it is to open a door for all sorts of error. Secondly, notice that Jesus chooses 12 apostles. 12 is the number of the people of God because of the 12 sons of Jacob. The appointment of these 12 as the new foundation for the people of God marks a change from the way in which race established one as part of the people of God to conversion. These 12 were witnesses to take a message by which the ends of the earth would hear and be saved. This marks the change from birth to rebirth as the means of entrance into the people of God. The keys of the kingdom handed to them by which they were able to define God's people is bound up in this. Thirdly, notice that Jesus called them apostles. Here is how one commentator speak of apostle, 'The concept of an apostle can be traced to the Jewish concept of the *shaliach*, which also referred to a messenger sent with full authority to act on behalf of another. Some rabbis, for example, were sent to the Diaspora (Jews living outside of Palestine) with authority to act on behalf of the Sanhedrin on various matters. A *shaliach* could also act on behalf of an individual, similar to the modern-day legal concept of power of attorney.'<sup>1</sup>

Apostles are important because they are those handpicked individuals who have seen the resurrected Christ who have been authorized to have authority in the church and to represent Jesus as witnesses. They therefore form the foundation of the church Eph. 2:20 and are granted a specific ability by the Holy Spirit to remember Christ's words perfectly and to reveal the future John 14:26. These are the ones who have special signs to authenticate their message 2 Cor. 13:13. And are instruments of revelation from whom we get the scriptures Eph. 3:5, 2 Pet. 3:15-16. This gift is no longer given to people in the church today, it has come and gone and served its purpose. Those who claim to be apostle today or claim that we need the ministry of the apostles today are ignorant to what God has already done.

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1 MacArthur, J. (2011). [Luke 6-10](#) (p. 17). Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers.

Now in approaching this list we note that this is one of four lists in the NT. The list falls into 3 groups of 4. All the lists start with Peter and end with Judas except the one in Acts because Judas has committed suicide. All the lists begin with Peter, Andrew, James and John. And each of the three groups always has the same person heading it, Peter, Philip, and James son of Alphaeus.

## **Peter**

'Simon, whom He named Peter.'

The first mentioned is Peter, this is because of his prominence among the apostles. This does not mean that he is the foundational person for the office of the Pope but that among the band of the 12 he was the natural leader. His name is Simon, in Aramaic that is Cephas, Christ gave him the name Peter which means 'rock'. Simon is a man who is impulsive, we see an example of this when he threw himself into the sea to swim ashore to meet the resurrected Christ in John 21:7; and has a foot shaped mouth, this is seen when Jesus has to rebuke him saying get behind me satan in Matt. 16:23, no doubt the name Peter was intended as an encouragement to stability and strength.

We see Peter being developed throughout the gospels. And the good news is that God made something of him. Various characteristics stand out which helped him develop. Firstly we see that he was not afraid to ask questions. It was Peter in Matt. 15:15 who asks Christ to explain a parable. He was not afraid to acknowledge his ignorance and seek answers this led to his growth. Secondly, Peter was not afraid to get involved. Remember when Jesus was walking on the water listen to what Peter said, Matt. 14:28-29, 'And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." <sup>29</sup> He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus.' Sure this meant that Peter would get rebuked for not thinking, for being impetuous, for being faithless, but it was through these hard lessons that he grew. Fear of failure, procrastination, worried about exposing your ignorance or immaturity, these are some of our native sins. Peter grew because he was not held back by these things.

One of the usual ways of doing a character study on Peter is to contrast the Peter we see in the gospels with the Peter we see in his later epistles and a tremendous change can be seen. In John 18:11 we see Peter cutting off the ear of the servant of the high priest, but listen to him in 1 Pet. 2:21-23, 'For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. <sup>22</sup> He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. <sup>23</sup> When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.' The anger and the violence gave way to suffering injustice like Christ.

Peter would have been party to the argument among the disciples about who was the greatest in Luke 9:46-48. But listen to 1 Peter 5:1-4, 'So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: <sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; <sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.'

His greatest lesson was learnt in death. He had sworn that even though the other apostles abandoned Christ that he would not, but like the others he run away and even denied Christ three times. Jesus restored him to ministry calling him to feed His lambs and sheep, John 21:15-17. However, Jesus also spoke of his death, a death spoken of in John 21:18-19.

Tradition has it that Peter was crucified upside down because he did not want to be crucified like Christ, since he had denied Him three times. A man who had once had no compassion for sinners and no courage, learnt the lesson of restoring the fallen and dying for Christ. The grace of God towards him in restoring him to ministry and in Christ dying for him left him a changed man.

## **Andrew**

'And Andrew his brother.'

Next we come to Andrew, the brother of Peter. He was in business with Peter, and like Peter came from Bethsaida but lived in Capernaum in order to fish the Sea of Galilee. It seems that Peter and Andrew also co-owned a house, Mark 1:29. Although listed in the first four, Andrew did not form part of the inner circle of Peter, James and John. There are two key texts where we gain a bit of insight into Andrew's character, John 1:35-42 and John 12:20-22.

In John 1 we see that Andrew was a disciple of John the Baptist John 1:35, this already tells us that he is a believer who believes the promises of the OT, respecting the word of God, taking sin seriously and looking forward to the Messiah. Further proof of his taking God's word seriously is seen when he hears God's prophet John declare that Jesus is the Lamb of God and as a result Andrew followed Jesus, John 1:36-37. Andrew spends some time with Jesus and is immediately convinced that Jesus is the Messiah, John 1:40-41, 'One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup> He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).' Here was a man who was receptive to God's word.

Not only that we see that he is also eager to share the word. We see the first thing Andrew did was share his faith, he shared it with his brother, his business partner and the one he co-owned a home with. V42, 'He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).' He brought him to Jesus, there is a pattern here. In John 12:20-22 we see something similar, 'Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup> So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." <sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.' The fact that Greeks wanted to meet with Jesus was a big deal and something outside of Philip's comfort zone, but when Philip told Andrew, Andrew knew what to do, he went and told Jesus. He did not want to keep the Gentiles away from the Jewish Messiah, he was not worried to worry Jesus with this request. He was an evangelist at heart.

He appears two more times in the gospels, at the feeding of the 5000 talking about the boys loaves and fish, John 6:8-9, as well as with the inner circle of three when questions about end times arose giving rise to the Olivet discourse, Mark 13:3. He is believed to have been crucified as a martyr on a cross in the shape of an X. His remains are said to have been removed to Scotland and the place where the ship that wrecked landed is now known as Saint Andrews. That is why he is considered the patron saint of Scotland though he never visited the place. King Angus who was about to fight a war at the time claimed a vision where St Andrew appeared to him and he saw a white cross on a blue background, and that is why the Scottish flag has its present appearance.

## **James and John**

'And James and John.'

The last apostles we will look at today are James and John. James and John are brothers and often listed together. James is more often found first which most likely indicates that he was the older and John was the younger. Their father was Zebedee, and their mother was Salome. Now if you cross reference John 19:25 with Matt. 27:55-56, the one says that Jesus aunt or Mary's sister was present, while the other says that the mother of the sons of Zebedee was present. This means that it is possible that James and John were blood cousins to Jesus Christ through Mary.

These brothers were also known as Boanerges, or sons of thunder. They are well known for their zeal which could lack compassion. Luke 9:52-55, 'And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. <sup>53</sup> But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. <sup>54</sup> And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" <sup>55</sup> But he turned and rebuked them.' Here we can see that these brothers are in their cage stage of being Christ's disciples. They are convinced that Christ is the Messiah, how dare Samaritans who they have condescended to include reject Christ. They betray their lovelessness in desiring the judgement of Sodom and Gomorrah upon them.

Not only that but in Matt. 20:20-22 we see their mother go to Jesus to ask for positions at His left and right hand. And yes they were party to the request because when Jesus talks about them being able to drink that cup they are right there to claim that they are able. These brothers were proud as well as loveless.

James had his life and ministry cut short by being beheaded in Acts 12:1-2. He was the first of the 12 to be martyred. John went on to write 5 books of the NT. And in those books we see a man who is vastly changed. The man who was so loveless speaks more about love than any other biblical author using the word over 100 times. There is an old legend about the apostle John. When John was old and unable to walk, he would be brought into the congregation on a pallet to give a word of encouragement, but every time he was brought forward he would lean upon his elbow and plead with the Church just this one thing, 'Love one another'. He would say nothing else but this, 'Love one another'.

And the man who wanted a prominent position in John 13 lays out in great detail the servanthood of Christ as He washes His disciple's feet. And when it came to talking about himself in his gospel account he calls himself 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' not seeking prestige or power or position but was contented in the fact that he was loved by Jesus.

Impulsive Peter, quiet Andrew, zealous James and John, cowardly Abraham, drunken Noah, adulterous David, faithless Gideon, stuttering Moses, runaway Jonah, doubting Habakkuk... add your own name and your own weaknesses. No matter what your background, no matter what your personality type or foibles, no matter what your baggage or your brokenness God can use you. There is no one here who is whole, who is pure, who is a success, we are all sinners, all failures. However, God in His grace came to earth to partner with us and put us to work. Are you part of this plan? Are you teachable, looking for the next opportunity to serve or grow, are you living in fear of criticism or risking it for God? You might think that you have nothing to offer, neither did the apostles, these were not the cream of the crop but still used by God to turn the world upside down. Will you answer the call?

