

The Disciples of Jesus – Introduction

Jesus called a group of unholy sinners, mostly uneducated, rejects of the world, to be his disciples to take his glory to the ends of the earth, bringing hope to all who would believe. Most of us would never have chosen the men who Jesus chose to be our successors. However, Jesus saw the potential in each of them. One, of course, was chosen to fulfil God's purposes in an unpleasant way, and sometimes God allows such people into our lives to fulfil his purposes that run completely contrary to human logic. After all, the cross was not a logical outcome for a successful preacher and healer.

Luke 6: 12 – 16 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Mark 3: 13 – 19 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means "sons of thunder"), Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

1) The selection of the apostles

- I'm not going into the calling of each of the disciples in this message. I'll do that when I deal with each disciple individually.
- These passages are referring to their designation as apostles.
- So, what's the difference between a disciple and an apostle?
 - A disciple is a person that is committed to a particular teacher to learn from him.
 - An apostle means a messenger that is sent
 - This means that he is taking his disciples beyond personal transformation and belief and on to purpose in the world.
 - God wants us to move from our personal growth and transformation to fulfilling God's purpose for us in the church and in the world.
- Three things Jesus did before designating them apostles:
 1. He prayed
 - Jesus didn't take the selection of the apostles lightly. He first sought the will of the Father
 - Before making big decisions we ought to follow in Jesus' footsteps and seek the face of God to align our wills with his so that his will will be done, and not ours.
 - John 6: 38 – 39 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all those he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.
 2. He called
 - He called his disciples to himself
 - He is the one who chose us. We didn't choose him. And he called to himself those who he had chosen.
 - We so often mistakenly talk about us having chosen to follow Jesus where in fact it is he who did the choosing.
 - John 15: 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit —fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.
 3. He appointed
 - He chose his disciples and appointed them firstly for salvation and to have eternal life
 - Acts 13: 48 When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.
 - It is in this choosing that he appointed some to be apostles.
 - He appoints all for works of service in the capacities that he's gifted each of us
 - Ephesians 2: 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

2) The purpose of the apostles

- Mark 3: 14 He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.
- Jesus appointed the apostles to carry on the messianic mandate of preaching and setting the captives free.
 - Isaiah 61: 1 The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.
- A teacher doesn't only pass on knowledge to his disciples, but reproduces who they are.
- Jesus intended that his disciples become all that he is, except for his divinity, and do all that he did, except for his work on the cross.
 - 2 Corinthians 3: 18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
 - John 14: 12 Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.
- Although Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God, healed the sick, and drove out demons he was investing into the lives of his disciples preparing them for after his death, resurrection, and ascension when the mantle of ministry to the ends to the earth would be handed over to them.
- We might not be apostles but God still has a purpose for each one of us in this world.
 - What is unchangeable is that he is transforming us all into his image – his character – whilst retaining our individual personalities.
 - What is changeable is the diversity of works that we are all called to do according to the way he has gifted us.

3) The diversity of the apostles

- Jesus intentionally chose his disciples from a diversity of backgrounds.
- He was going to, on the cross, break down the dividing walls of hostility within cultures and communities, as well as across communities.
 - If such walls cannot be broken down within cultures and communities, it is doubtful that they would be able to be broken down across communities.
 - His new commandment to love one another was not a mere cliché, but a reality considering their different backgrounds where they wouldn't get along naturally.
- In his disciples Jesus was preparing the church for what he wanted it to be.
 - The diversity of the church is a testimony to the world that Christ truly is Lord and the head of the church.
 - John 13: 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.
- His disciples were fishermen, tax collectors, zealots, and others.
 - For such a group to love one another would take a miraculous transforming work of the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus calls us to be his, to be changed to be like him, to do the works that he has done, and to love one another in the midst of our diversity.