

Jesus Chooses

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[0 : 00] Please turn again with me to Luke chapter 6 and verses 12 through 16. It's funny how when you go through a gospel or a book in a consecutive manner, that the passage which appears for a particular week fits perfectly into the theme of that week.

And today's passage is titled, Jesus Chooses. Jesus Chooses. Thank you. Heavenly Father, we bow in your presence.

May your word be our rule, your spirit our teacher, and your greater glory, our supreme concern, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Of all the founders of the world religions, Jesus Christ, though he stands alone, was very rarely alone.

We don't think of Jesus without thinking of his 12 disciples. And though he alone stands supreme, they were with him. Greek Orthodox Christians have pictured this truth in one of their icons called Hoampalos, which means the vine.

Jesus is pictured in the middle as the vine, but he's surrounded by his 12 disciples. He is the vine. They are the branches. Though Christ alone is to be worshipped, he was rarely alone, for he chose these 12 men to be his companions in life and ministry, and through them to proclaim the glory of his love in his gospel.

[1 : 42] It all begins in Luke chapter 6, verses 12 through 16, where Jesus chooses 12 men to be apostles. This text is important to us as Christians today, because it once for all both establishes the apostolic authority of the gospel we believe, and it also sets the course of the church's purpose, which we've already heard from Evan this morning, in all ages as mission and evangelism.

So this morning we want to ask four questions about this passage. Why did Jesus choose? How did Jesus choose? Who did Jesus choose?

And why did Jesus choose? Or for what did Jesus choose, rather? So first of all then, why did Jesus choose?

Why did Jesus choose these 12 men? Well, from Luke chapter 5, verses 17 to chapter 6, verse 11, Jesus is beginning to face opposition from the authorities of his day.

We read in Luke chapter 6, verse 11, that having witnessed Jesus, in their minds anyway, breaking the Jewish Sabbath, his opponents were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

[3 : 04] Now these religious authorities were the first century Jewish equivalent of today's Taliban. They were men who, if you wanted to keep your head, would be best avoided.

But now Jesus has drawn their attention, and filled with fury, they're conspiring with each other how they might deal with this new threat to their religious control and their political power.

Now we know the end of the story. They will arrest Jesus, they will torture Jesus, and they will execute Jesus on a Roman cross. Jesus' disciples didn't know this would happen.

They're still under the misconception that as the Jewish Messiah, Jesus will take the place of an earthly king of an earthly empire. They don't know that Jesus will be crucified, but Jesus does.

Keen student of the Old Testament, and son of God, he knew that the only crown he would ever wear wouldn't be composed of golden diamonds, but of thorns.

[4 : 14] Jesus knows that his time on earth is limited, and so he makes plans for the mission of the kingdom, which he has begun to expand after he's gone.

And so he chooses these 12 men to continue the work he has begun of proclaiming, both by word and work, good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and so on. Through them and their ministries, from heaven, by his Holy Spirit, he will continue to offer salvation to a world lost in sin and guilt and shame.

These 12 men will be his instruments of gospel proclamation and the expansion of the church over the whole known world. Remember, Luke is the first volume, the second of which is the book of Acts, which records the way in which the heavenly Christ worked through these 12 men, bringing salvation to all kinds of people and building for himself a church against which the gates of hell could not prevail.

It all begins here in Luke 6, where Jesus summons these men to himself and calls them apostles. I remember reading a rather touching story about a young mother who was dying from terminal cancer.

[5 : 46] In her last days, she wrote a letter with a list of instructions to her husband as to how to raise their children after she had died.

She made careful preparations for what would happen after she had gone. And in the same way, Jesus is here making careful preparations for what will happen after he is cruelly taken from them by crucifixion and after his triumphant ascension to heaven.

He appoints 12 of them to be his apostles and through his teaching, example, and Holy Spirit gave them instructions as to how to preach the gospel and to build his church.

Now, there are many applications we could make of this point, not the least of which it's important that, like we're doing, a church identifies, appoints, untrained successors, but the most important application of this for us is to do with Christ.

Because even from this early stage in his ministry, for no fault in him, Jesus knew that the religious authorities were after his blood.

[7 : 09] Jesus' crisis experience in the Garden of Gethsemane may be some years ahead of him. And yet, even now, he's feeling the nearness of his own death and being taken away.

But he does not run away from death, but rather makes careful preparation for the expansion of the gospel. Though the distant agony of the cross is some way away, because of his love for us, in that without the cross, there'd be no gospel to proclaim, he appoints 12 men to continue what he has begun.

The ultimate application of this point as to why Jesus chose these men as apostles is the loving determination of Jesus to continue to pursue crucified self-sacrifice, knowing that unless he died on the cross, there'd be no gospel for us to believe, no forgiveness of sins, no restoration, and no church for us to build.

And for that, we praise him. Why did he choose succession? Second, how did he choose? How did he choose?

Well, it's no surprise to find Jesus choosing the 12, kneeling on a mountainside, praying to his father. That's not to say that Jesus didn't know these men, their characters, their strengths, their weaknesses, but perhaps he wasn't thinking so much about the kind of men they were as what by grace he could make them into.

[8 : 52] But he consulted no one except his father in heaven by prayer. This is the only reference in the New Testament to Jesus spending an entire night in prayer.

And it's at this most important juncture when he knows that for his remaining time he must invest in these men who after he's gone will expand the work he has begun. He chooses these men in prayer.

Now we might ask ourselves the question did Jesus make a mistake in choosing Judas Iscariot? That Jesus didn't know Judas well enough at this point well enough to know that later on Judas as we read in verse 16 will become a traitor.

Well here we find an answer. It was in prayer to his father Jesus chose Judas to be a disciple. His father knew that Judas had a role to play and so he instructed Jesus to choose him.

This was no mistake on the part of Jesus. It was a divine appointment to facilitate Jesus' betrayal and sacrifice on the cross for his people.

[10 : 12] He made his choice of these twelve men on his knees in prayer. prayer. This was a pattern the early church followed. We read in Acts chapter 13 it was while they were praying and fasting the leaders of the church in Antioch were commanded by the Holy Spirit to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the work of mission and evangelism.

And again we could make many applications at this point not the least of which is to be prayerful in appointing those to positions of leadership in the church.

It must be God ultimately who decides and not us. But again the ultimate application has to do with Jesus. A careless reading of this passage might lead us to believe that Jesus was reacting to the pressure being put upon him by his enemies.

But the reality is different. by intentionally conferring with his father in prayer for a whole night he is demonstrating that he is in ultimate control of the situation not his enemies.

And that's who Jesus was then and that's what he is today. The king and sovereign control of all things. Yes, even of the situations which will lead to his arrest to his torture and to his death.

[11:40] he leaves nothing to chance. He leaves nothing to chance. He must prepare these men to continue his work because he must die upon the cross anything less than his death there and there would be no salvation for any of us.

Jesus leaves nothing about our eternal salvation to chance but because he loves us at every stage he's in control of his own destiny. And he chooses the suffering of the cross.

And he chooses it for us. His all night prayer isn't something which from time to time we as his followers may not imitate.

It's a good thing to do that from time to time I guess. but that for which we worship him because it reinforces his determination to love us all the way to death and beyond.

How did Jesus choose? Third who did Jesus choose? Who did Jesus choose? If you look at the text with me you'll see that Jesus had many disciples from a natural reading of verse 13 he chose from out of these many disciples twelve men who he would call apostles.

[13:12] We don't know why Jesus chose some disciples and not others but we do know the following three things about these men Jesus chose. First they were common men.

Second they were from different backgrounds and third they were held together by one bond. So first of all they were common men. They were common men.

Twelve men all distinguished by this one thing. None of them were distinguished. Four were fishermen at least four maybe five. One was a political hack another was a tax collector.

We know nothing almost nothing about the remaining six. none were prominent figures in the life of Israel. They were common men. They were men of the people from the people for the people.

Following Jesus would not be for them a route out of experiencing the problems of the common man because for the following three years they'd have no regular income no regular housing.

[14:16] They were common men. God most often chooses common people to accomplish great tasks for him. He chose an English tinker called John Bunyan and a Scottish weaver called Mary Slessor so that the credit for the great things they achieve in his name may not be theirs but his.

It reminds us does it not of how the religious leaders in Acts 4 verse 13 reacted to Peter's speech.

they said 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'd been with Jesus.

It should be a concern to us when our churches are not made up of the common man and when our leaders are not common people who are familiar with Glasgow's peoples.

Jesus didn't choose to work through talented men but common people which means surely that if there's anyone here this morning who thinks they lack the refinement the education status to serve God they like these 12 men are actually a perfect candidate for the job.

The church needs more common men in its pulpits who are from the people who are of the people and most importantly are for the people.

[16:10] Secondly they were from different backgrounds different backgrounds four of these men were related by their profession as fishermen a few were related by blood but that's where the relationship between them ended.

One was a former tax collector another a Roman collaborator another was a zealot a Jewish nationalist others though named we know nothing about we don't know about their relative ages some like John may have been teenagers maybe even still able to go to the Bible class others like Bartholomew may have been matured adults they were all from different backgrounds they were not mirror images of each other a ministerial friend of mine was being unfairly criticized for being slightly different in his approach to ministry in the free church he was deflated by the criticism which one of us isn't and when around his kitchen table we talked together he unburdened himself to me and he looked out of the window of his kitchen to the garden and asked me to look at all the brightly colored birds flying here and there in his garden there were siskins and there were gold finches all beautiful birds and he pointed at the flowers that he planted in the borders of his garden some were

roses and some were marigolds some were brightly colored and others were rather plain and he said to me he said each of these flowers attracts a different kind of insect and each different kind of insect attracts a different kind of bird it's the variety of flowers which attracts all these beautiful birds to my garden the church needs leaders cut from different kinds of cloth in order to attract different kinds of people to the gospel what a boring place the church would be if we were all the same if we were all tertiary educated for example and spoke with a posh voice how would we ever attract the wide variety of people the gospel is designed to reach if the demography of our church was monotone diversity and different background leadership is to be welcomed in the church for then and only then is the gospel demonstrated as being truly for everyone they were common people they were from different backgrounds but they had one bond one bond these were common men who had little in common but what joined them was their friendship with Jesus

Christ they weren't a social club they weren't a religious clique they were a group of different people from different backgrounds who were joined together by the magnetism of Jesus words and works this is what sets the church apart from every other institution on planet earth my wife and I love going to our running club but if I'm being honest everyone in that running club is just like us white middle class but the church is so different we're many shaded we're multi classed all things being equal if it wasn't for a shared faith we wouldn't really have that much in common with each other what unites us is that we have one bond Jesus Christ the attractive force of Jesus magnetism drawing us together in love is so much more powerful than the repulsive forces of our worldly differences we cannot but be drawn to other disciples of Jesus Christ we may travel to a different country I've often heard this from folk in the congregation here we may travel to a different country and we feel very far away from home but when we walk into a church in that country though we may not understand the language which is being spoken we feel at home because we know we're with fellow disciples of

Jesus Christ Christ and we have this common bond with each other these three features of Jesus choice of these men common people different backgrounds one bond can be summed up in this one phrase unity in diversity unity in diversity that's the mark of success in the church when there is unity in diversity no matter social class or color personality type or background political persuasion or economic status everyone is accepted on the basis of a shared gospel around the coving of the presbytery hall and the free church offices in Edinburgh are painted the words one is your master and all ye are brethren but why did Jesus set this pattern of unity and diversity for us to follow it is so that the unity of our common bond in

Jesus Christ might result in people from every background being attracted to the gospel and that on the last day when that innumerable multitude are gathered before the throne of the lamb he may receive the worship of his whole creation this unity and diversity principle must influence every aspect of the church from our mission to our discipleship from our worship to our service and though you may look around this building and see no one else's who is exactly like you you belong here because you like us you believe in the same Jesus we do who did Jesus choose and then lastly for what did Jesus choose for what purpose did Jesus choose these men notice there are twelve of them twelve new testament apostles of the church to succeed the twelve old testament tribes of

[22 : 44] Israel Jesus gave them a new name apostles apostles is a compound greek word made up from two greek words apple meaning from and stelo meaning to send the word apostle means to send from or even the sent one Jesus chose these twelve men to be his successors he sent them from himself and gave them the name those sent from from heaven by his spirit Jesus chose these men and he sends them out for two reasons first authority and secondly mission first authority he chose these twelve men to be his apostles he may have had hundreds who were his disciples we see that in verse 13 but only these twelve were directly commissioned by him and that's one reason that are no such thing there's no such thing as modern day apostles only twelve ever existed because there were only twelve ever expressly sent by and from

Jesus remember Luke wrote this gospel to the early church it was a church which had many problems with false teachers claiming authority for their false doctrines Luke records this episode to remind the early church that only twelve men have the express authority of Jesus to pronounce on matters of doctrine and life because only they have been directly commissioned and sent by him so many of these apostles would go on to write books and letters of their own inspired by the spirit of the risen Jesus these letters and books would become part of the bible which for all time is to be

treated as God's ultimate teaching on the gospel the church is to believe and to proclaim the new testament the whole new testament is largely written by the apostles present that day in Luke chapter 6 or under their express commission on all matters of life and doctrine in the church today the apostolic authority in the bible is to be believed and proclaimed because only here is the safe path to living in union with christ enjoying his love and following him as his disciple when christians move away from the authority of the apostles in the bible they begin to believe in all kinds of harmful things and lose the gospel for which jesus died and rose so when we place church traditions on the same level as the bible when we place cultural standards on the same level as the bible when we place our background beliefs on the same level as the bible when we place our ethnic origins on the same level as the bible when we syncretize the bible with other religions we don't make the gospel more attractive we lose the gospel altogether it is the word of jesus in the bible which is to be the only rule of faith and life for the christian for it's only here we have the gospel fully proclaimed and offered free of charge to all kinds of people so jesus calls them apostles those sent from to establish their all time authority but second mission mission the language of sent from is the language of mission jesus sends these twelve men out from himself with a message he has given them to proclaim the message of good news sent from is the opposite of stay here sent from is the opposite of stay here these apostles aren't to sit tight in galilee and ring the wagons rather they are to take forth the gospel of jesus christ to a needy world christ has commissioned them not merely for the purposes of continuing his ministry but extending his ministry he sends them out and he gives them the name apostle to remind them they are to be missionaries they are to be evangelists the risen christ will continue to reach out to a world lost in sin and despair through them proclaiming the gospel of his saving love it'll begin in jerusalem and from there it'll spread all the way around judea and into samaria and then encompass the entire gentile world jesus calls them apostles because they are to spearhead the mission of his church a church which must always be on a mission footing if it's to be called an apostolic church

the church is never called to stay here we must resist every temptation to ring the wagons to strengthen the things that remain and to hold on to what we have rather in the boldness and courage the gospel preached by the apostles brings we go there we make disciples of all nations none of us here are apostles in the biblical sense but all of us have the same gospel imperative go there jesus has sent us to live in homes in the homes that we do live in for a reason that we might make disciples of our families he has sent us into the workplaces and social clubs he has for us for a reason that we might make disciples for him there at the forefront of his choosing of these twelve men to be apostles is jesus command go and preach the gospel to every creature under heaven this passage is all about mission and evangelism our church if it is to be an apostolic church if it is to be based on the examples of the apostles must gear every single one of its activities in this direction mission evangelism it isn't just the apostles who are the sent ones of god it's all of us so we leave this passage today asking the question how can i get involved in in the great mission of jesus to continue preaching the gospel how can i get involved that's a great question it's got many answers but the most important of them all is this the apostles spent time with jesus getting to know jesus and they believed in jesus with the exception of course of jesus iscariot they spent time with jesus they got to know jesus they believed in jesus we must too read our bibles to pray for opportunities to share in the mission of the gospel you've heard of one of these opportunities even provided it for us all beginning of the service get involved in local mission there are many others we can provide you with god will open a door for us that we may walk in the footsteps of these 12 apostles god will have all the glory of our mission evangelism and our devoted lives amen