

Calling Out The Twelve

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[0 : 00] Step back for just a moment in your mind, and I want you to consider what Jesus was actually doing at this point in his ministry in Galilee. Everywhere that he traveled, he preached the message of the kingdom of God, and we are told that plainly in chapter 1. In fact, just flip a couple of pages over. We point this out often in this study, but it's helpful for us to be reminded of it again. Mark chapter 1, verse 14. After John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, and here's what he was doing. He was preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and here was the summary of the content of that message in verse 15. The time is fulfilled. The kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent ye and believe the gospel. Well, what was this message of the kingdom of God that he was preaching as he went from place to place? It was the good news that Jesus had come to provide salvation for his people. And in response to the proclamation of that good news, he commanded that those who heard the message would repent of their sin and follow him in faith. Repent and believe the gospel.

And so these people, these Jews mostly, had long awaited a Messiah. In their mind, this Messiah would come to restore their nation, to deliver their nation from the Roman oppression that they had faced for so long. But the message of Jesus was different than national deliverance. He had actually come to deliver them from something far greater, a far greater enemy than Rome, a far greater enemy than Babylon, a far greater enemy than any other enemy that they may have even to this day. And that enemy was the enemy of their their nation. And so as you continue to read your Bible, you will discover that the way in which Jesus provided this deliverance was by taking our place, suffering our death, and conquering death through his own resurrection. What was taking place according to 2 Corinthians chapter 5 is that as Jesus was dying on the cross, those who would come to believe him, God was imputing our sin onto his own son. God was looking at his son, Jesus Christ, as if our sin was his sin. And for those who believe, God then looks at us and he sees the righteousness of his son, Jesus Christ, as if it was our righteousness. And so how would Jesus come and deliver these people? It wouldn't be through a revolution. It wouldn't be through politics. It wouldn't be through war. It would be through his own death. And as he died on the cross, he took our sin and he became, as John wrote in that second chapter that we just read, the propitiation, the full appeasement of the wrath of God against sin on all who would come to believe in him. That's how he would do it.

And so as Jesus is going from place to place and he's preaching this gospel message, this is what he's preaching. He hasn't been this clear about it yet. He hasn't said just yet that this is what would happen when he went to Jerusalem, that the crucifixion would take place in the resurrection.

[3 : 24] He's going to, but he hasn't said that yet. He simply said, the time is at hand. The kingdom is near, meaning he representative of the kingdom is near, repent and believe the gospel.

And out of his perfect love, he satisfied the wrath of God. And this is the truth of the gospel of the kingdom. This is why it matters. Again, second Corinthians 5 21, for our sake, he made him to be sin, who knew no sin, that we might have the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. And then again, if you've been reading in 1 John 4, in this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he has loved us and has sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins, the appeasement of God's wrath for our sins.

This was his words, but there was another part to what Jesus was doing. He was traveling through Galilee. He was preaching the message of the kingdom of God, and that was his primary objective, but he also performed many mighty works, and we've studied many of those. And what was all of that about? Of course, an expression of the compassionate heart of Christ for sinners and sufferers, but the purpose of these works was to point these people back to the message. As he preached the message of the kingdom of God, he performed the works in order to validate the message that he

was preaching, which is why he said so often as he went from town to town, for the towns that rejected him. Remember, there's the one section, we'll get to it eventually, woe unto you, Chorazin, woe unto you, Bethsaida, and as is even recorded, at least in the King James Version here in this particular passage, that even those towns will suffer a greater judgment than even Sodom and Gomorrah from the Old Testament. Why? Because they saw the works of Christ. They were witness to the Christ. They heard his message, and yet they still rejected the message, but that's what the works were for. They were signs of his true identity, and they pointed to the gospel message. And so Jesus did all of these things to announce that the kingdom of God was near in him. But as he did these things, there were 12 men that tagged along with him, and they watched him, and they listened to him. And ultimately, they patterned their own ministry after his.

And what Jesus was going to do with them as he sent them out was he was going to use them and empower them to preach his words and to perform his works. And so there's no question that Jesus had a special purpose for these 12 apostles. Was these men that he used to lay the foundation for the church?

And theirs was certainly a unique and unrepeatable role in redemptive history. But despite the unique nature of their call and their role in the church, the calling of these 12 men is representative of the task that's given to each and every believer. The mission of proclaiming the gospel, of preaching the words of Christ, and mimicking the works of Christ is not exclusive to just a few specially called or gifted Christians. But the Bible actually makes it clear that this is not just a responsibility for a select few, but this mission is giving to all those who name the name of Christ.

[7 : 21] And I want to give you just a few bullet points to support that before we jump into verse 1. Think about this. Jesus sometimes sent people out in addition to these 12 apostles, and he gave them the same exact instruction. Go from village to village. He gave them the same regulations even in one instance. They were to preach the message of the gospel. They were to perform the works that Jesus was performing in his power, and they were to prepare the way for him. Luke chapter 10 tells us plainly, after this the Lord appointed 70 others and sent them on ahead of him two by two into every town and place where he himself was to go about. So even in Jesus's own ministry, it wasn't just limited to 12 people. There was at least one occasion where he's sending out 70 or more people to go and do this same exact task that he was sending the 12 to do here in Mark 6. Not only that, as we study the Great Commission in Matthew 28, Jesus didn't intend for the command to make disciples to be absent from what they were to teach others to observe. Remember what he said in the

Great Commission. Go therefore and make disciples, teaching them, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.

Well, Jesus didn't expect that what they were teaching and what Jesus had commanded, that this responsibility of evangelism would be absent from that. And then we see in Acts, in the book of Acts, and even later in the New Testament, everywhere Christians went, they carried the gospel with them. In Acts chapter 8, it was Saul before his conversion that was persecuting the church, and the church, the Christians were beginning to have to scatter across the world. And here's what it says, Acts chapter 8 and verse 4, Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. It wasn't just the apostles going about preaching the word. The impact of the gospel on the world in the days of the apostles was not limited just to those few men. It was all Christians that were spreading out across the world under great persecution and taking the gospel with them. It was not just a matter of obedience for these men, but for every believer. Paul wrote of the necessity of this for the salvation of the lost.

In Romans chapter 10, how then will they call on him and whom they have not heard, or have not believed? And how are they to believe in whom they've not heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching to them? In 2 Timothy, Paul encouraged Timothy, a pastor in Ephesus, to do the work of evangelism. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist. Timothy was not an evangelist. He was a pastor. He was a representative of Paul in Ephesus, and yet he is still encouraged to do the work of an evangelist. And Paul says immediately following, in doing all of these things, fulfill your ministry. And then of course, we know Acts 1.8, you will receive power. After that, the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and the other most parts of the earth. John Stott said in relation to this particular verse, we can no more restrict the command to witness than we can

restrict the promise of the Holy Spirit. And the truth is that God calls and he gifts us each differently, but the great commission, the mission of taking the gospel of Jesus to the world, and of mimicking the works of Jesus in the world, belongs to every Christian. And so though this text has elements that apply specifically to these men at this particular time, it also contains principles that endure for us today. And so as we use our next two studies in Mark to examine these few verses, we'll see three things. We'll see that there is a commission to fulfill, that there is instructions that we should obey, and that there is a pattern of ministry to follow. And as I said, we'll only get to this first one today, which is this, if you're keeping notes, there is a commission to fulfill, a commission to fulfill. Look again with me at verse seven. And he called the 12 and began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. So after months of following Jesus and watching him closely, he's finally sending the disciples out to preach his words and to perform his works. Now let's think about this in the kingdom language that Jesus so often used. The king, Jesus, was commissioning his representatives to proclaim the good news of the kingdom. And here in this verse, in this simple verse,

Mark notes three actions that Jesus takes in the process of calling and sending these men. There's calling, there's sending, and there's empowering. And it's the exact same pattern that follows in the great commission that is given to all believers. Jesus calls us to himself, he sends us on his mission, and he empowers us with his spirit to perform the task to which we have been called. All three things represented here in this summary statement that Mark gives us in verse seven. So let's just look at the three. First thing we see, and he called the 12. Do you see it there? And he called the 12.

[13:19] Now, as far as Mark's gospel is concerned, this is now the third time that Jesus has issued a call to these men. The first one was a call to actually follow him. And Mark tells us about the experience of five specific disciples. In fact, let's look at it together. Flip back with me to chapter one first, if you would do that. You'll remember we covered this, I think, back in November.

In Mark chapter one, verse 16, passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men. Already a hint there in this passage of what he was going to one day use them to do. Now, he hasn't used them to do that yet. At this point, he's only called them. He's only put them in an observational role, but eventually they would become indeed fishers of men. And then it says, immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little further, he saw James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him. So four of them initially are giving a first call. It was a call to follow Christ in faith. And all four of them abandoned everything that they were doing in order to follow Jesus. And then flip over to chapter two, and we see this happening once again. This time, it was not fishermen he was calling. It was actually who the fishermen would have absolutely hated and despised. It was a tax collector. His name is Matthew. Mark chapter two, verse 13.

[15:12] He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus. We know his Greek name to be Matthew. He was sitting at the tax booth, and Jesus said to him, follow me. And what did Matthew do? He rose and followed him. This was their first call. What is this call all about? This is the effectual call of God to salvation. Every true believer experiences this call, whereby they hear the gospel message. They are stirred by the Holy Spirit of God. And in response to that, they abandon everything in repentance, and they follow after Jesus Christ alone in faith as Lord and Savior. This was their first call.

All of us must come to a point where we hear the gospel message, and we respond in faith and repentance. These men had been called to that, and they had left everything to follow Christ. But it's not the only call that we've seen in Mark's gospel for these men. In fact, we see another call. It was a call that set them apart for a unique purpose. Look at chapter 3, verse 14.

And he appointed 12, whom he also named apostles, so that they might be with him, and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. Now, he didn't send them to do that yet.

But he issues this call. He sets them apart. He gives them a unique apostolic call. And that's really what that is about in chapter 3. But the principle applies to each of us still.

God gifts and calls each of us to serve him uniquely, but the foundation of that call is the same. He calls us to be with him, and he sends us to go for him. He calls us to be with him, and he sends us to go for him. Look back at Mark 3, in verse 14. He appointed 12, so that they might be with him, and he might send them out to preach. Now, listen, this isn't a separate call from salvation.

[17:32] This isn't different or extreme from the call to follow Jesus. It's actually an extension of it. Discipleship in this way is not a higher tier of Christian experience.

It's not that only the people that really got it together and only the people that really want to follow Jesus get set apart for the work of God in some way or another. No, discipleship is not that. Every believer is called to follow Jesus, is also called to be a faithful disciple of Jesus. We have the same call. Be with him and go for him. And he gifts us in different ways, and he puts us in different places, and he calls us to perform that work in different ways to edify his church and to preach the gospel. But the call, the foundation of it is the same.

Follow me and be with me and go for me. And we do that as we study the Bible, as we commune with God in prayer, as we yield to the work of the Holy Spirit. As you walk with Jesus in this way, you'll find yourself being continually enraptured by his love. And this always, always leads to passionately sharing the gospel with others.

Think about what Paul wrote to the Ephesians in Ephesians chapter 2. He said, You say, how am I supposed to become enraptured with the love of God?

[19:13] You get in your Bible, and you spend time in prayer, and you focus on the gospel.

because as Paul looked and he considered the gospel that he had been given when he considered the great mercy that is in Christ and the great love with which he has loved him he felt constrained to do nothing but to take that message and to share it to others he found Jesus to be the treasure in the field and the pearl of great price I love those parables perhaps my favorite in relation to the kingdom of God you remember him Jesus said the kingdom of God is like this it's like a man who goes and he finds a treasure in a field and he goes and he sells everything that he has and he buys that field and then he says it's also like the merchant who is on search for a great pearl and upon finding a pearl of immeasurable value he sells all of his possessions all of the things that he has in order that he may buy that one pearl of immeasurable value and Jesus says I am the pearl I am the treasure and as you come to understand the gospel you'll give everything up in order to have that treasure you'll give everything up in order to have the surpassing value that is in Christ Jesus the pearl of great price and as you continually come back to the gospel and study the word of God and spend your time in communion with him and you become enraptured with the love of God how can you not share that with others we collect things sometimes things of great value and when people come to our home what do we do I want to show you this thing that I have it may not mean much to you but it means everything to me I have in my office a picture that Mr. Quo gave me last year it's uh um psalm 23 and verse 1 written in mandarin and then right next to it I have he gave me a uh a Chinese name and he he has that written out and every time people come in my office Mr. Quo I take them I show them I said you got to see what Mr. Quo gave me I have to use google translate to figure out what it says but it's so cool for most people it means nothing to them it means a lot to me and what does that say for our recognition of the value of Christ and the gospel in our lives

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the love of God controls me and that I have determined in viewing the gospel that there is such great value in the gospel his love has shown me so much he goes on to say that one has died for all therefore all have died and he died for all that those who might live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised and Paul says when I consider this gospel and I consider this love I am constrained by it to the extent that it controls everything that I do it controls everything that I say it controls everything that I do for the Lord so Christ calls us to be with him what does that mean we study our bible we commune with him in prayer we focus our attention on the gospel therefore those who are not going out for him give evidence that they have not been with him it doesn't mean that every person who doesn't faithfully share the gospel or serve the Lord in one way or another it doesn't mean that every one of them aren't believers but it at least means that it's been a while since they've been captivated by Christ's love through the gospel and I find this incredibly convicting because my witness is weak you would think that it would be difficult to stand on a platform Sunday by Sunday and preach a message like this but it's actually not that hard to do what's more difficult is to do it as you step off of the platform if your evangelistic efforts are weak like mine the first step is to refresh yourself on the wonderful grace of Jesus Christ in the gospel

I remember times growing up somebody would come in a pastor or visiting preacher whoever it was you go to youth conference there was always something like this there and there would always be a sermon that was specifically on the need of evangelism and all of that's good and well but but it was presented in such a way that I thought okay I'm not I'm not great at sharing the gospel and my first response is I'm going to grab a handful of tracks off the track rack and I'm just going to start handing out tracks listen to me if you are weak in your evangelism the first thing that you need to do is not grab a bunch of tracks and go hand them out to people in your neighborhood the first thing you need to do is get in your bible and to get on your knees in prayer and focus your heart on the gospel of Jesus and the overflow of that as your love for Christ is renewed once again is I can't wait to share with you what Christ has done and if you will just believe he will forgive you too he will save you too of course the best way to share the gospel is to be thoroughly convinced of it yourself effective evangelism does not begin with winning an argument with someone on Facebook or on next door or whatever it is whatever the venue is that you prefer to argue it's by demonstrating that you actually believe the things that you say that you believe how do we do that we do that lots of ways what about the expression of joy that we have day by day in this life when we get distracted away from the gospel and its impact on our lives we really start to become such ungrateful people don't we we don't demonstrate joy in Jesus we demonstrate a love for the world but when we demonstrate the joy even the deepest darkest moments of our life it gives evidence that we actually do believe this thing that we say that we believe about eternity and about hope and about Christ we show this in our song I love congregational singing it's my favorite thing it's my favorite thing when we come together outside of the preaching is that I love when we sing together and if someone were to come in here that was an unbeliever even if they didn't believe it even if they didn't believe this message would they be able to see the way that you sing and know that you actually do believe this you can't carry a tune worth a lick but man but man you must you must really believe this our passion our urgency our commitment to the Lord our commitment to be obedient to him our knowledge of him people may think you're delusional or fanatical but may they never think that you are insincere and so what was it what does this have to do with call well this is now the third time that Jesus has issued a call to these men and the second one was be with me in order that you may go for me and now because they have been with him they are able to go for him and so we see calling we'll see the last two quickly then we see sending look at verse 7 again and he began to send them out two by two so the second action that Mark notes here is the actual sending of the twelve and again Jesus exercised wisdom as he strategically and methodically sent these men out on this mini mission began seems to suggest that he staggered their departures perhaps due to specific assignments which just reminds us once again even if you were to study church history and you would see that all of these men went to different places and they were used in different ways even despite being apostles themselves they were used in different ways in different places perhaps he staggered this in order to give them specific assignments to go and to do what he desired for them to do in this moment it's just wisdom it's organization provided security for their journey it provided encouragement in the work it provided credibility as Jewish custom and even law necessitated that at least two witnesses be present to confirm a statement or an accusation

Solomon wrote about this in the Old Testament two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil for if they fall one will lift up his fellow but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up again if two lie together they keep warm but how can one be warm alone and though a man might prevail against one who is alone two will withstand him what is Jesus doing here?

[28 : 38] well he's just practically sending them out with wisdom now we don't need to view this too woodenly Jesus intention here was not that we would stagger our times of evangelism and it wasn't that the only way to effectively do the work of the ministry is to do it in pairs that's not the point the point is that God has given us each a unique assignment in his work and our commission is to be fulfilled in partnership with other believers particularly the church to which you belong so not only has God called us and sent us and empowered us but he desires that we do that in concert with his church and with his people and then the third action we see he gave them authority or power over the unclean spirits now in the summary

Mark chooses to specifically highlight the fact that they would have authority over unclean spirits but we know that that authority did not limit itself to just unclean spirits because later on we see that

they were actually able to heal many people as well and that there was great power as they preached the gospel as Jesus would preach the gospel and so the emphasis here is not so much on the unclean spirits as it is on the authority and the power so Jesus not only called them not only sent them but he empowered them to do the work to which they were called and this is an important reminder for us that the fruit of their ministry was not the result of any power within themselves but it was the power of Jesus at work through them they had no power without God giving them that power which means the power was not their own but the power and the authority belonged to Christ they weren't to go in their own name they weren't to build their own kingdom they were to go in the name of Christ building the kingdom of Christ and this is the fact that surprised so many of the enemies of the gospel in the book of Acts these were ordinary men common people they had no theological training they hadn't been to the rabbinical schools they were fishermen and tax collectors and anti-Roman zealots yet the religious leaders of the day were blown away by the power with which they preached the gospel remember in Acts chapter 4 now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were uneducated common men they were astonished and here's what it says they recognized that they had been with Jesus they didn't look at Peter and John and say what great power is in Peter and John they looked at Peter and John and said these men must have been with Jesus and how did they know that?

by the works they performed and the message that they preached it wasn't about them there was no power in them it was about Christ and it was about his work and Christ empowered them to do the work that he called them to do so Jewish custom it recognized that the sent one was sent as if he was the one who commissioned him in other words the authority of these men in proclaiming Jesus' words and performing his works was to be viewed as that of Jesus similar to a modern ambassadorship they were ambassadors for the king and though they went in the fullness of Christ's power the authority was not their own but the one whom they represented Paul wrote about this he wrote about it this way in 2 Corinthians 5 that is in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us that message of the gospel that message of reconciliation therefore Paul says we are ambassadors for Christ

God making his appeal through us and then he makes his appeal he says we implore you then be reconciled to God what is this ambassadorship about?

we are not representatives of ourselves we're not building our own kingdom in Cornelius we're not doing our own thing we don't matter one person said preach the gospel die and be forgotten we don't like to live that way we want everybody to remember us we all want to have a legacy we all want to be applauded for the things that we do but it wasn't about these men it was about Christ they were going with his authority they were going in his name and it was only because of that that they were used so mightily in the work of God and Paul said that's what we are we're ambassadors we're ambassadors for him and what do ambassadors do?

[33 : 43] they represent the king and what are we to do? represent the king how? by preaching his words and doing his works just like these men you say what does that mean?

well for Paul it meant looking at the people to whom he was preaching he's saying therefore I implore you be reconciled to God and that may be all that it means for you that as you go to your family and your friends and your co-workers and whoever it is that the Lord sends you to that that's what you say I'm an ambassador for Christ therefore please be reconciled to God share the message and urge people to respond we're his representatives in this place at this time and he's commissioned us to go in his power and in his authority and it's easy for us to be timid in this task but this truth actually comes as a great comfort because he didn't tell these men go from village to village and figure it out no no he gave them authority he empowered them and later on he's going to tell them the night before his arrest the night of his arrest he's going to say I'm going to leave and when I leave I'm going to send a helper and the helper is going to remind you of everything that I've taught you and he's going to open your mind and he's going to empower you and then we get to the book of Acts and that's exactly what he did the Holy Spirit came and empowered them in a way that they would have never dreamed why?

in order that they may perform the work that God had called them to perform you don't have to have it all together to be a witness for God you just need to be with Christ you just need to be with Christ and if you're a believer today you already have the Spirit so go in the power of that Spirit trusting him to be fruitful in the work as you are faithful remember that great commission in Matthew 28 go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son

and the Holy Ghost teaching them to observe all things that's a heavy command it's overwhelming isn't it but we can't understand that commission without the promises on either side of it because Jesus opens up in verse 18 and he says all authority is given to me in heaven and earth go therefore because of this authority I give it to you I'm going to go with you and then at the very end of the command what is it that he says and behold

I am with you always even to the end of the age you say how am I supposed to go and do this how am I supposed to be a faithful witness how am I supposed to do anything as far as mission is concerned you do it because God has empowered you to do it and you rest in the promise that he has given that I will not leave you I will be with you so we go with his message and his power and we trust him to fulfill his promise and let me just close like this Jesus and this is really the point of spending so much time on this verse Jesus is still calling he's still calling he's still sending he's still empowering this wasn't limited to these men this matters for us he is calling us he is sending us and he will empower us to do the work and we think back in history and we think about all of the people that we have seen this so glaringly in history

[37 : 29] Julie and I we were all sitting in the living room last night watching a series of videos of I think it was Tim Challies was going around the world and he was finding historical artifacts that would communicate the unique way in which God had used different people in Christian history throughout the world and he was doing and he was going to all these missionary places he goes to China and he sees the work of Hudson Taylor and he goes to India and he sees the work of William Carey and of Amy Carmichael and we can think of others we can think of people like Adoniram and Ann Judson who went to Burma and we can think of other people who have gone across the world and across the seas and the Lord has just used them they were called and they were sent and they were empowered to do a great work and it wasn't a matter of going for a couple of years and going home they gave their lives for that they're buried in those places because God had called them and it's listen God still calls people and he still sends people and who's to say that he's not sending you somewhere he's at least sent you here he's at least sent you to your neighborhood and to your family don't forsake the call go in his power but think of all the thousands and thousands and thousands of people throughout Christian history whose names you will never know whose faces you will never see who have given their lives to be empowered by Christ to do this work and they have served in obscurity and they have served faithfully and they have glorified God in the same way that these 12 men glorified God because it's not about these men it's not about us it's about him and his gospel and he's still calling and he's still sending and he's still empowering so the question is not is Jesus still doing these things the question is are we answering and are we going and are we going and obeying in his power for