

The Disciple's Call

Mark 3:7-19

- I want to go back to some of my least favorite memories this morning: gym class.
- Just the mention of the word sends shivers down our spines, because many of us dreaded gym more than any other hour of the day.
- For us non-athletic types, it was filled with fear and loathing.
- The worst was that moment when the coach appointed team captains and let them pick.
- You watched as all the stronger, faster, more attractive kids got picked until it was finally a battle for the bottom as somebody had to pick between the runts of the litter.
- You know the phrase, "Sigh...well, I guess I'll take Sean."

- It felt awful to not get picked for the team, didn't it?
- Our teenage hearts wanted so desperately to belong and fit in, so that rejection could be brutal.
- That desire doesn't stop, does it? When we get passed over for a promotion, don't get into the major we want, or can't find the love of our life, we find ourselves on the outside.
- It still hurts, although we handle it differently than we would have then.

- With that in mind, I want you to open your Bible to **Mark 3:7-19**.
- Today, we are going to see Jesus hand-pick His team.
- These twelve men are going to be the group we refer to as "the disciples" and later "the apostles". We will explain why we use those two terms, so if those are weird words, just hang tight.

- Here's what I want you to see: Whoever you are, whatever you've done, Jesus is calling you to be His disciple.
- Whether you were the team captain or the last one picked, I want you to hear this morning that Jesus wants you to be His disciple.
- Let's set the stage here. Start in **verse 7-12**.
- Here, Mark gives us a summary of what has been going on in Jesus' ministry because we are approaching a new phase.
- We are taking a break from the conflicts He has been having for the moment, although they will pick right back up.
- Jesus has been teaching and preaching for a while now, some suggest up to 18 months or so.
- Although He has called a few people so far in the book of Mark, He has never made it formal.
- Jesus is back in the area around the Sea of Galilee, but people are coming a long way from all directions to hear Him and be healed and freed.
- It's gotten to the point that **verse 9** tells us that Jesus needed to have a boat ready so He could get out if the crowds got too intense.
- There is no way that even Jesus Himself could adequately teach all those people.
- In fact, as we will find later, many of them weren't really interested in following Jesus; they simply wanted what He had to offer.
- They were drawn to the miracles, but they didn't really care about the message.
- So, out of those crowds, Jesus formally calls twelve men to Himself.

- These men occupy a unique position in all of history. They are the men God will use to turn the world upside down with the message of the Gospel after Jesus is raised from the dead.
- They will walk with Jesus and talk with Jesus and tell others about Him in a way that you and I cannot because they walked with Him during His ministry on earth.
- In one sense, then, we cannot be disciples and apostles like they were.
- However, Jesus extends the call to be His disciple to all of us.
- Although we didn't walk with Him along the Sea of Galilee, we have the Bible as the record of all He has done, and if we have surrendered our lives to Him, then we have His Spirit in our hearts to guide us and shape us and lead us to tell others about Him.
- The call to those who would be Christians, then, is not a call to simply fill a seat in a church on Sunday. As we will see, it is a call to follow, learn, and tell others about Jesus.
- Let's see the disciple's call this morning answering two questions:

1) Who does Jesus call?

- Go back to **verse 13**.
- Let's talk for a few minutes about the specific twelve that Jesus called to be the disciples/apostles, and then we will draw out some principles that apply to us.
- The number twelve is significant, because it reminds us of the twelve tribes of Israel.

- Just as God's people had twelve tribes, so now the new kingdom was going to start with a group of twelve.
- There is something really cool here that I don't want you to miss: Jesus hand-picked the men He wanted for the job.
- Out of the thousands that followed Him, these were the ones He was entrusting with the mission to learn from Him and take everything He taught them to the rest of the world.
- If you were Jesus, with the most important message in history to share, who would you get to be your disciples?
- We would go for the best of the best!
- So, let's look at this cracker-jack team that Jesus assembled:
 - We have already heard about four of them: Simon, Andrew, James and John.
 - These guys were all fishermen. Although likely hard-workers, they didn't have any formal religious background to speak of, and yet as we go on, we will see that they end up being Jesus' closest companions, even out of the Twelve.
 - Simon gets renamed "Peter", which is a name that hints at his foundational role in getting the early church up and running.
 - He's not a very stable guy, though, often letting his mouth run away before his brain engages.

John MacArthur calls Peter, "...the apostle with the foot-shaped mouth."¹

 - Then we have James and John, whose nickname Mark says means "Sons of Thunder." That's probably because they had a tendency to try to get Jesus to strike people dead and things. They were strong

¹ MacArthur, John Jr., *Twelve Ordinary Men*, Nashville: The W Publishing Group (2002). 32.

characters, although less talkative than Peter.

- There were men from different political backgrounds as well.
 - Remember Levi, the tax collector from a few weeks ago? He worked for the government no one liked, and pulling together what we see from the other Gospel writers, he went by the name Matthew.
 - Check out the other Simon, too. His nickname was “Simon the Zealot”, which may indicate that he was a part of a radical political group that so hated Rome’s occupying forces that they would use sabotage and assassination to get their job done. You know who they liked to kill? People like, well, tax collectors!
 - I bet that made for some lively discussions, don’t you think?

 - We could go on, but suffice it to say that the only thing that these men had in common was that Jesus had called them.
 - They were from different backgrounds, with different agendas and ideas about who Jesus was and what He was going to do.
 - That was the group that Jesus called, and within only a matter of decades, they had completely overturned the known world with the message that Jesus died and rose again to bring us into His kingdom.
- What does that have to do with you?
 - By calling the outcasts, the random, the diverse group of men that He called to be His disciples, that shows us that you and I can be His disciples as well!

- You don't have to be a spiritual giant or come from a certain family.
- Age, race, and gender do not stop us from following Jesus:
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:28, NASB95)
- He extends the same call to everyone who would respond. In Jesus' day, following a teacher was sometimes referred to as "taking on his yoke", which was a harness put on animals to direct them to do their work.
- Here's what Jesus said:
"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
(Matthew 11:28-30, NASB95)
- If you are hearing my voice, Jesus is calling you to be His disciple.
- He's not calling you to simply sign a card or to try harder to fix yourself, He is calling you to be His disciple and His apostle.
- **If you're going to answer the call, then we need to know the second part:**

2) What are we called to do?

- Go back and reread **verses 14-15** with me.
- Jesus called these twelve to two basic activities: learning and going.
- First, they were called to learn.
- That's what the word "disciple" means. A disciple is a learner; someone who willingly submits themselves to someone else's teaching.

- That's what Jesus is getting at when He calls them to be with Him.
 - Jesus' disciples will be with Him while He is teaching and preaching and healing, and they will also be with Him when the crowds go away.
 - They will hear His teaching, and He will explain it to them in ways the crowd never hears.
 - Because they are there with Him, they will see Jesus and know Jesus unlike anyone else.
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- That is what Jesus is calling you to do as well.
 - He is calling you to be His disciple—to learn who He is and what He has done.
 - Although you can't sit down and physically have breakfast with Jesus over a fire, you have His Word written down and His Spirit living in your heart.
 - You come to know Him as you get to know His Word, as you spend time praying and listening to Him, and as you walk through your life with Him.
 - If you're married, think about your spouse. If you have been married a while, you can pick up some of what your spouse is thinking without them ever having to say a word.
 - You know this about your parents or about your children as well, because you have spent time with them.
 - The first thing Jesus is calling you to do is develop the discipline of spending time with Him, both in set-aside, special time and also in the rhythm of your day.
 - Instead of checking Facebook, pray for the person sitting next to you in class. Instead of perusing the magazine, think back over what you read in your quiet time that morning.
 - Learn who He is and who you are and what He is up to in the world around you, because that's what it means to be a

disciple.

- There's more, though. Jesus didn't call them to simply be disciples, He also called them to be apostles.
- "Apostles" is a term that was used for officially commissioned representatives. Think of an apostle as an ambassador—someone who is sent out to speak and represent the country they come from.
- When you respond to Jesus' call, He is calling you to learn who He is, and then He sends you out into the world as His ambassador.
- That's why He said He was calling them to spend time with Him as well as going out to preach and cast out demons.
- He calls us to come and learn, and then take what He has taught us to our neighbors and the nations.
- In His final charge to the disciples, who were now His apostles, Jesus said:
 - *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
(Matthew 28:19–20, NASB95)
- That wasn't just for the Twelve; that is for all of us!
- We all have a responsibility of taking the message of the Gospel to those around us who don't know Jesus as their Lord, whether they live next door or across the world.
- Here's what's awesome, though: Jesus doesn't send us out to be His ambassadors alone; He promises that He is coming with us!
- You see, you and I could never represent Christ on our own.

- We have all fallen short of His design, and we continue to do so.
- That's why we don't go out simply trying to teach people to be moral; we go out teaching them that they can't.
- You see, Jesus doesn't choose His team like we choose.
- You can't play hard enough to earn a spot; all you can do is surrender.
- In fact, the harder you try to save yourself, the more and more you make yourself an enemy of God.
- That's why Jesus came and died on our behalf; so that you and I could have a spot on His team, a place in His kingdom, not because we have earned it, but because He has.
- Jesus is calling you to come and die to your self and live for Him. Will you do that?
- That's the call of a disciple.