

### "He Appointed Twelve"

Today we return to our series in Mark and see something amazing. Now as we have been studying this gospel, we have already been seeing plenty of amazing things. We've seen Jesus perform a number of miracles, which he does more of today in our passage. In verses 7-12 Jesus heals more people and casts out more demons. And yet what I think is even more amazing is what follows in verses 13-20. In those verses Jesus appoints twelve men to be in his inner circle, to be disciplined by Christ, with the ultimate goal of evangelism - to use these men in bringing the good news of the kingdom to the world. Jesus hand picks twelve men, a diverse group full of unlikely candidates, eleven of whom will ultimately become his apostles. And it will be through these apostles that Jesus builds his church, and brings his gospel to the ends of the earth.

This is something amazing. Jesus, the eternal Son of God who had come to earth, takes in these twelve to form a close knit band of brothers. As we study on in Mark we'll see that Jesus closely teaches and instructs these twelve, privately explaining things to them in ways that he doesn't with the crowds. Jesus takes them into his confidence and even shares with them details of his suffering on the cross. And yet what is most amazing, I believe, is that Jesus entrusts his gospel message and kingdom ministry to these men. That God would trust such a message and ministry to any man is amazing, let alone this group of men. And yet Christ's selection and use of these men testifies that it is the power of God alone working in these men that makes their work fruitful. And as we look at this passage and see Christ's appointment of the Twelve, we'll see that it is in anticipation of something greater. In this passage, Jesus begins a process in working with these men that will ultimately lead to the Great Commission. For it is in the Great Commission where Jesus commissions the Twelve to go to the ends of the earth with the gospel to make disciples themselves of all the nations.

And when we think about this passage from that perspective, from the perspective of the Great Commission, we see how this amazing appointment of the Twelve extends to ourselves as well. If this appointment of the Twelve points to the Great Commission, then it points to us. We, Christ's church, are the fruit of the labor of the Twelve. Amazingly, Christ appoints the Twelve, commissions them, and sends them out. We have been brought in through their work. And then, amazingly again, Christ entrusts his gospel ministry to us. We the church are the next generation of the Twelve; they have passed the baton to us, so to speak. We have been appointed for this time in history to go to the nations with the gospel, and to be making more disciples. But as we look at this passage we will find that we do not go unprepared or unequipped, but Christ is at work in us to bless and multiply our labors and use them for his glory.

And so let's dig into this text now and look at this appointment of the Twelve. I'd like us to begin by observing the context in Mark for this appointment. We find this in verses 7-12 which provide a short summary of some of Jesus' ministry. And in these verses, as Jesus is about his ministry, we see a crowd coming to him. In fact, the text tells us twice that it was a "great multitude." Look at where this large crowd has come from according to verse 8: from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan; from Tyre and Sidon. These were not all close by places. Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem would have represented the typical area known as Israel, but the rest of these places are just beyond the land typically considered as Israel. In other words, these are lands that would have

been considered as the "nations", where primarily gentiles would have lived. Idumea, for example, was the ancient land of Edom, and was just south of Israel. Tyre and Sidon were coastal cities just north of Israel. Those from "beyond the Jordan" were from the wilderness east of Israel. Now surely there would have been Jews living in those places too. The Jewish people had been scattered throughout these different regions, but they still primarily lived in Judea and Galilee, in the land which made up the Promised Land of Israel. So the text doesn't tell us if the people in this large multitude were all Jewish or not, but surely, there would have been at least some gentiles in these crowds. But regardless, what is clear in this text is that Jesus' ministry was attracting a wide geographical audience. His message was not staying just in Galilee where he had been doing most of his ministry up to this point. The news of his ministry was spreading even to the neighboring lands, and people were coming from great distances to see Jesus. And so this passage shows that Jesus ministry was beginning to extend beyond the geographical boundaries of Israel.

It is in this growing international context of Jesus ministry that he appoints these twelve disciples. Surely this is not coincidental in how Mark presents his account of Jesus' ministry. As Jesus' ministry begins to extend beyond the borders of Israel, Jesus appoints the twelve disciples that would become the twelve apostles, the very apostles he would commission to bring the gospel to the ends of the earth. This growing international context of Jesus ministry, followed by the appointing of the Twelve, foreshadows Jesus' sending of the disciples to the nations. It also foreshadows the missional character of the New Testament church. It reminds us that our mission as the church always includes outreach and discipleship; we must be reaching out to the world and making disciples from all places.

So that is a summary of the context of Jesus' appointment of the Twelve. Let's turn now and look further at *who* Jesus appointed. I've already mentioned in a couple previous sermons, when we observed the calling of several of the disciples, the unexpected, and even scandalous, aspect of some of those whom Jesus called. We saw that he called four ordinary fisherman, not the likeliest candidates to serve as leaders in a religious movement. We saw that he called a tax collector who would have been seen as sinner and one of the most despised in society by the religious elite. On top of that, this is very diverse group of individuals, who had different personalities and conflicting values. Look at Peter and Thomas for example: both called here as part of the Twelve, yet Peter is seen in the gospels so much as the ever optimist, almost too gung ho to a fault, whereas Thomas, sometimes referred to as doubting Thomas, was certainly more skeptical and calculating as a person. In other words, these were two very different types of people. Look at another example in this list of Twelve. You have both Matthew and Simon the Canaanite. Matthew had been a tax collector, someone who would have had close ties with the Roman government, and would have been seen as supporting the Roman occupation. But Simon the Canaanite was a Zealot - that's what the word Canaanite means here, it's the Aramaic word for a Zealot. And a Zealot was a person who was radically opposed to the Roman occupation of Israel, so much so that Zealots would often violently protest against the Empire and sought to overthrow the Romans in any way possible. I'm sure those two had some interesting conversations.

These observations hint at the diverse makeup of these twelve men. The point is that *Jesus* chose them. Even amidst their diversity, even amidst their shortcomings, he chose them. He chose them according to *his* criteria. If we tried to think of what in each of these men he found worthy of his selection, I think we would be hard pressed. The emphasis in the gospels is not in any traits that make them worthy selections. The emphasis is on Jesus' choice, where he would then

disciple these men and transform them. The emphasis is on the radical transforming power of the kingdom. Of course, we too can relate to that. As we have been made disciples, we testify that it is God's grace that has worked in our life and continues to work in our life. It is God's grace which transforms us. That is what qualifies us. That is what grows us. That is why we can be used in the growth and outreach of the church.

But notice another aspect about who Jesus called - the number. He called twelve; not eleven; not thirteen; twelve. Verse 14 says that very plainly. He appointed twelve. Numbers can carry a lot of significance in the Bible. That is clearly the case here. Jesus' appointment of twelve disciples makes you think about the twelve tribes of Israel. In the Old Testament, God's chosen people were divided into twelve tribes, descending from the patriarch Jacob. These twelve tribes represented God's people and so the number twelve became significant in Scripture. For example in the book of Exodus, we see this imagery of twelve by what the high priests of Israel had to wear. They had to wear a breastplate when they ministered in the temple, and on this breastplate there were to be twelve stones, one to represent each tribe. So the number twelve in the Old Testament served to refer to the entire nation of Israel who represented God's people.

And now, Jesus picks twelve disciples. This shows the disciples connection with Israel and the Old Testament. Jesus ministry and his discipleship of the twelve are rooted in the Old Testament. Jesus, though revealing wonderful and amazing things about the coming kingdom, was not starting a new religion. He was bringing fulfillment to the promises given in the Old Testament. The Twelve, as Jesus's appointed disciples, were part of that fulfillment. They represented God people. They represented Israel. They represented the promises given to the twelve tribes of Israel. They would even first be sent as apostles to the twelve tribes of Israel. The kingdom ministry of Jesus began with Israel, so their ministry would too. And yet, their ministry would NOT be exclusive to Israel. As foreshadowed by the great multitude who came to Jesus in our passage, their mission would eventually extend beyond Israel, to all people, tongues, tribes, and nations. God had promised to Abraham, the patriarch of Israel, that "all the nations of the earth will be blessed" through his offspring. That promise finds its fulfillment ultimately in Christ, but also in the Twelve who are the offspring of Israel that Christ appointed to send forth his blessings to the world. Of course this reminds us that we as a church have been sent to all people, and we can't be content to only reach out to those like us.

So we've looked at the context of this appointment. We've looked at who Jesus appointed. Let's look now at what the purpose of this appointment was for. In other words, why did Jesus appoint them? What was he appointing them to do? Verses 14-15 give the answer. They list the reasons why Jesus appointed these twelve men. The first reason that it gives in verse 14 is so that "they might be with him." Jesus appointed these men so that they could be with him. They were to be in his inner circle of disciples. In other words, they were being appointed to discipleship. They were going to be learning closely from Jesus. He would be personally training them. When we see this worked out in Mark, it's rather interesting. Jesus' ministry is rather veiled at times when he preaches and teaches to the crowds. Jesus would typically teach in parables, which in Mark 4:11 Jesus acknowledges that those outside the kingdom do not understand the parables. And yet though Jesus would teach the crowds in parables, we see that he would later explain the parables in private to the disciples (Mark 4:34). In Mark 10, we also see the twelve disciples privileged to learn about Christ's sufferings on the cross ahead of time from Jesus. And of course the twelve disciples are literally *with* Jesus all the time. They are seen as traveling with Jesus wherever he went. And so Jesus' appointment of these twelve was for the purpose of disciplining them. They

received close teaching and mentoring from Jesus. And part of why Jesus was discipling them was to prepare them for ministry.

That is the other aspect of why Jesus appointed these men; he appointed them for ministry, for evangelism, to spread the gospel, and to make disciples themselves. That what verses 14-15 say; it says that he appointed them, "that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons." That's three things: preaching, healing, and casting out demons. Now I have to note for you that the second item, healing, is actually not in the earliest Greek manuscripts that we have, so it probably got added accidentally into the manuscript tradition at some point. You'll find it in the KJV and the NKJV, but not most of the newer translations that use the better manuscripts. But if it did accidentally get added to the manuscripts at some point, it's understandable, because it definitely brings out the sense of this passage. You see Jesus was appointing these disciples for ministry. He was appointing them to not just be his disciples, but also his apostles. Jesus had big plans for these disciples to be his representatives. And so if we look at Jesus' ministry, we see him preaching, healing, and casting out demons. When we see the Twelve later sent out as apostles, we see that they too are preaching, healing, and casting out demons. In other words, the ministry of the Twelve Apostles looks like the ministry of Jesus. That is because Jesus was training them to do what he was doing. The Twelve, when they are sent out, are sent out in Jesus name, and carry on his ministry. And as Jesus ministry was carried out with extraordinary demonstration of the kingdom power, so too the Twelve. As foundational leaders of the church, they would go forth with this extraordinary kingdom power shown through their healing and casting out demons.

And so even though the healing was probably not explicitly stated in the original text, verses 14-15 still carry that sense. For Jesus to appoint them to preach and to have authority to cast out demons, clearly reminds us of what Jesus himself was doing. It clearly draws the comparison between what Jesus has been doing and what the Twelve would do as apostles. And so the fact that the phrase of the healing somehow entered into some manuscripts along the way, only confirms this interpretation of this passage: that the Twelve were being appointed to a ministry that mimicked Christ's ministry. They would be preaching the good news of the kingdom to the world. And just like Jesus, they would be endowed with the power of the kingdom. A power that demonstrated itself through authority over demons, and even a power that brings healing to the sick. What a radical responsibility that would be given to the Twelve. What an amazing apostolic mission. Christ appointed the twelve to both discipleship and to evangelism.

And we see this appointment to evangelism and ministry being fulfilled initially in Mark 6, where Jesus sends out the twelve two by two. We'll look at that passage in a few weeks when we get to chapter 6. Ultimately, however, this appointment to evangelism and ministry finds its fulfillment in the Great Commission. It's amazing how Matthew records that commission; when Christ commissions them, even then he promises to be with them. In our passage for today, Christ appoints them to be with him, with the goal to do the work of ministry. Then when Jesus actually sends them out in the Great Commission, he again affirms his promise that he will be with them. What a great encouragement and comfort that would have been to the apostles. And what a great encouragement and comfort it is to us who continue that work of ministry.

Trinity Presbyterian Church, our passage for today shows us the appointment of the Twelve for ministry. It shows us how they were being called to be discipled, and to ultimately disciple others. They were being called to become witnesses of the gospel. They were being called to proclaim the good news of the coming kingdom of

God. That call now belongs to us. We the church, are called to witness to the gospel. We are called to bring the gospel to the world. That is our mission. That is our call.

To some Christians, this will mean a special call to the ordained ministry. You might be called to become a pastor, or an elder, or a deacon. If you are, then this passage should especially encourage you as you pursue that path, that it is Christ who prepares you and who equips you. But to all Christians, this call means that you too are to be engaged in the ministry of the church. You cannot leave ministry up to the ordained officers. All Christians are part of the church. All the church is founded upon the apostolic ministry of the Twelve, which is founded upon the ministry of Christ. All of us, as the church, are commanded to go and make disciples. All of us are appointed to ministry, if not to ordained ministry then to lay ministry. And what I mean by lay ministry, is that each of us must use God's gifts he has given us to aid the work of the church, that work which especially includes evangelism and discipleship.

But if we are going to be involved in ministry, we must be prepared. That means as much as we each have been appointed to ministry, we each have also been appointed to be discipled. We must each be "with Jesus", so to speak. We must learn from the Lord what it means to be a Christian. And we must learn what it means to share the gospel with others. As we are discipled, then we can be involved in the ministry of the church which discipled others. So how can you be prepared for this ministry? Well first off, you need to become a disciple, if you are not one already. That's in a sense what church membership is about. When you become a member of the church, you are saying that you are becoming a disciple who will grow under the ministry of Christ's church. It's a formal way to establish discipleship and accountability. It's acknowledging that we are not just lone Christians running around on our own. Rather, it's submitting to the shepherds whom God has established in his church to shepherd and lead the flock according to God's Word.

And so then as disciples of the church you are in a place to be grown and prepared for ministry. Then you will have opportunities to be prepared for ministry and evangelism. Now, some people have been asking me for such training. They've been asking that we have training on how to do evangelism and outreach. And I want to let people know that we will have some specific classes as time goes along on how to outreach, and how to share your faith. Those are important, and yes we'll do that. But your preparation to be involved in evangelism and discipleship is more than what can be covered in just specific classes like that. So I want to you be aware of some of the resources that are already available to you to prepare you for lay ministry. First, of course, is the regular weekly preaching of the Word. That is going to be your steady nutrition as a Christian, and as you grow as a Christian, then you naturally will be able to help others more effectively. A second resource is our Sunday Schools. This is actually one of the main reasons why I am leading a study through the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The Catechism deals with fundamental questions of the Christian faith. It raises issues that are at the heart of what we believe, and distinguishes us from many other worldviews and religions. That is why in the Sunday Schools I try to get us to think about what are some alternative views on the subjects we are studying. So my hope in the Sunday School series on the Catechism is that you can become better versed in systematically explaining your faith. That's at the heart of apologetics, and so it is also foundational for evangelism. A third resource for you will be our monthly Outreach Prayer Meetings. As I mentioned at the last meeting, I plan to facilitate a short discussion each meeting about some aspect of outreach and evangelism. And so that will also help equip you for sharing your faith. In addition to these three resources, there are also plenty of books I can recommend to you if you are interested. And, also don't forget your own times of personal

devotion as you read your Bibles and pray; these can be very helpful in growing you, and again preparing you for ministry. So, again, take advantage of these resources to prepare you for ministry.

And as you become prepared for ministry and actually go out into the world to share your faith with others, I want to encourage you that you go out with power. Now Jesus and the Twelve clearly went out to the world with power and authority. They demonstrated, in extraordinary ways, the power of the kingdom of God. Their miracles and exorcisms testified to the mighty power of God. God was doing extraordinary things at that time to serve as a foundation for the church. But just because our ministry is not colored with this extraordinary display of power, doesn't mean that we don't go out with power. We too have power and authority as we go out as Christians. Remember what Paul says in Romans 1:16. He says that the gospel is the power of God for salvation. If we bear the gospel in our ministry, then we bear the power of God. It's not that message of the gospel is crafted rhetorically in such a way to evoke a response. No, it's that God works powerfully through the message of the gospel to save people. So be encouraged. We don't go out to the world on our strength. It's God who is at work in and through us as we reach out to the world with the gospel.

And as you think about your role in ministry, I want to remind you that this passage shows us the growing international context of Jesus' ministry. People had been coming from all over to Jesus. Sometimes people will come from all over to us. Sometimes we will need to go to them. But since we as the church have been appointed as an extension of the Twelve, we cannot be content to reach out to only those who are like us. There is no place for racism in the church. There is no place for cultural superiority in the church. Surely Jesus belonged to a different culture and ethnicity than what is predominantly represented in this room right now. Many saints have done that through the ages as well. And when we look at Marin, and the Bay Area, we realize that we live in a very multi-cultural place. We do injustice to the gospel and God's transforming grace if we only try to reach out to people like ourselves. There's no reason to support world missions if we are unwilling to reach out to those different right here in our own city. It's an oxymoron to say that this is white church or a black church or a white collar church or a blue collar church. Revelation 7:9 pictures the church in heaven as a place where people from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples, and languages are gathered together to worship God. Yes, we are not in heaven yet. Yes, there are practical difficulties such as language barriers that require a certain level of segregation currently. But racism is not one of those practical difficulties. We have lots of people right here in Marin that are different than us, but not in ways that would practically keep us from reaching out to them. And so we must go to the nations that are even here right around us.

So we need to see our role in the ministry of the church. We need to be prepared for ministry. We need trust in Christ's power as we serve. And we must go to the nations. That is what we are called to do. We have been called to the gospel witness.

But this gospel witness will not always be without hardship. There will be difficulties in ministry. And so let me give you a practical suggestion, and that's this: Don't be afraid to be practical when obstacles arise. Don't be afraid to use common sense in solving problems. Even Jesus encountered obstacles. Even the great multitude that came to Jesus in this passage was a potential threat. It says in verse 9 that the crowd was so large that it threatened to crush Jesus. But what did Jesus do? Did he call down from heaven an angel to raise up a barrier between him and the people? No. He had his disciples keep a boat ready, that he could use to get away if the large crowds got too dangerous. Certainly Jesus could

have used supernatural intervention to preserve his life in order to protect the ministry. And yet it was right and fitting that Jesus, in his humility, take on our plight and live as a human.

So we need to be practical as we reach out to the community, as long as that being practical doesn't clash with God's word. Because we will have trouble. We will encounter obstacles. Look at the Twelve in this passage. Immediately after we see them appointed, what happens? Verse 20 says that the multitude came together again, so that they could not so much as eat bread. It says "they" couldn't eat. It wasn't just Jesus who couldn't eat, it was all of the Twelve as well. No sooner are they appointed as the Twelve and they already begin to share in Christ's sufferings. As much as they would share in Christ's ministry, they would share in his suffering as well. We too will encounter obstacles as we serve Christ. Don't be afraid to be practical in solving them. God has given us brains for a reason. Use common sense, in light of the principles of God's Word. And trust ultimately that God will bring the fruit.

Isn't this amazing? Isn't it amazing that God has called us to the gospel ministry? He has appointed not just the Twelve, but even all of us, to Christian service. I think of Revelation 7 which sees the 144,000 saints who were sealed in heaven. Many rightly point out that the number 144,000 represents  $12 \times 12 \times 1000$ . Two sets of twelve, multiplied by a large number. This seems like fitting symbolism to show the work of the church. In the OT, God's people were numbered by the 12 tribes. In the NT, God's people flow forth from the 12 apostles. Together, they make us the entire church. That's why Revelation 7 immediately follows the vision of the 144,000 with the picture of the church in heaven made up of saints from every tribe, people, and language. That's the result of the labor of the Twelve appointed in this passage. That's the result of the labor done through the church. That is the result of Christ working through us his people. It is amazing that he has entrusted such a glorious ministry to us! To him be the glory! And may we look forward to the completion of this great gospel work! Amen.

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