

“The Master’s Men” (part 1)

Mark 3:13-19

Let’s take our Bibles and turn to the third chapter of Mark, and we will be looking this morning at verses 13-19. Let’s say that you are going to recruit a team to alter the course of history. How do you think you would begin? Most of us would start with résumés. We’d seek out some men and women of influence. We’d look at their education, wealth, power, or political connections. We would look for people who have some notoriety and proven ability. But Jesus did something different. He began with a walk down by the sea where He said to a couple of fishermen, “Follow Me.”

In fact, the men that Jesus chose to be His disciples were not extraordinary by the world’s standards. And I know that goes against what most people tend to think. When they think of the twelve apostles, they imagine in their minds a group of saintly men with halos above their heads. Sort of like how they are portrayed in the renaissance paintings of the 15th century. Maybe like DaVinci’s Last Supper, or something from the Sistine Chapel in Rome. We typically elevate them in a transcendent way somewhere just below Jesus Himself because the assumption is that these are the highest and the brightest and the classiest and most religiously noteworthy men of all time. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are not divine. They are not the cream of the crop among men. They’re not the highest, and the best, not the most educated, not the most highly skilled, not the most gifted humanly speaking. The truth is they are an average bunch.

Satan attempts to convince us that our failures render us useless God and His church. But Jesus’ choice of these twelve men testifies to the fact that He delights in using the unworthy and unqualified. Jesus turned the world upside

down with these men, not because they had extraordinary talent, unusual ability, or powerful influence. No, He used them to turn the world upside down because God worked in them to do it. (Read)

The choosing of the twelve disciples by Jesus was a major turning point. It marked a division in Jesus' ministry into two stages. During the first stage, He worked mostly by Himself. Most of His miracles took place in a smaller area, and His teaching focused on basic truths. But by the time He chose the Twelve, the work had grown so large that it demanded organization and shared responsibility. Jesus' teaching was more detailed, and His ministry was reaching more and more people. Because so many were following Him, it became necessary for Jesus to select a smaller group to travel closely with Him. The crowds had grown so large that moving from place to place became difficult. It was no longer possible for everyone who believed in Him to follow Him everywhere He went. From that point on, most could only follow Him periodically, while the Twelve became His constant companions and closest disciples.

A.B. Bruce—*“But it was His wish that certain selected men should be with him at all times and in all places—His traveling companions in all His wanderings, witnessing all His work, and ministering to His daily needs. And so, in the quaint words of Mark, ‘Jesus called unto Him whom He would, and they came unto Him, and He ordained twelve, that that should be with Him.’”* (Read)

Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples, but not before He chose just a handful to pour His own life into and then would appoint as His apostles.

Charles Swindoll—*“Many would have seen Jesus' selection of the Twelve as curious. He didn't search the temple in Jerusalem for the best and brightest scholars. He ignored the schools of meticulous Pharisees who devoted their*

lives to strict obedience to the law. Instead, He chose James and John, known to their friends as the ‘Sons of Thunder’ (Mark 3:17, quite likely because of their bombastic tempers). He chose timid Andrew and his brash, outspoken brother, Simon. He invited the despised Roman collaborator Levi, who came to be known as Matthew, which means ‘gift of God.’ He picked cynical Bartholomew (a.k.a. Nathaniel, John 1:45) and Thomas, known for his questions and doubts. He hand-selected working-class, uneducated men with obvious flaws. Why would He? How could He? It is important to remember that Jesus saw His men not as what they were, but as what they were to become.”

When you stop to think about it, Jesus really had His work cut out for Him. He only had three and a half years to get His message out, to complete His mission, and to pay the debt for our sins through His death on the cross. I mean look back on your own life and think about what has taken place in three short years. It really isn't a whole lot of time. On top of that, Jesus had a group of twelve men to train, men who weren't the brightest bulbs in the box at the time. Three years in which the Son of God ministered, and within that time frame He would hand things over to these men to continue His work, and then He would be gone physically. And His mission would be carried on by these very human individuals, people like you and me, despite all their faults and failures.

We read about these men throughout the gospels, but from time to time, they will emerge in a significant way. Usually, they are behind the scenes. But here in our text, they are front and center where we find these twelve mentioned by name. You will find this same list of the twelve disciples in four places—**Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:12-16, and Acts 1:13**. And of course, you and I know them as the twelve disciples.

“Disciple” —the Greek word is *‘μαθητής’* (*mathētēs*) and means learner; one who learns by doing the same

These are the twelve ‘learners’ who were closely disciplined by Jesus, men who would later change the world. And they would become His twelve ‘apostles’ which means ‘sent out’ ones, those who would be His official representatives. So that as He taught them, He gradually released them into ministry through a four-step process. What was it?

- Jesus ministered and the disciples watched Him

He taught God’s truth while they observed, listened, and learned as part of the crowd. When Jesus went into the synagogue, or when He healed the sick and delivered those who were demon possessed, they were there to watch Him closely.

- Jesus allowed the disciples to assist Him in ministry

When He fed the multitude, we read that He broke the bread and performed the miracle, but the disciples then distributed the pieces to the hungry crowd. And they collected the fragments that remained.

- The disciples did the ministry, with Jesus’ assistance

Later in Mark 9, the disciples had been trying to cast out a demon from a possessed boy, but they were failing at it. In frustration, the boy’s father turned to Jesus and asked Him to intervene.

- Jesus watched as the disciples ministered to others

He sent them out with specific instructions, and we will see this in Mark 6. And so He ministered, they watched. He ministered, they assisted. They minister, He

assisted. They minister, He watched. Their discipleship was a very intentional process that He directed.

Ann Spangler — *“It involved a literal kind of following, in which disciples often traveled with, lived with, and imitated their rabbis, learning not only from what they said, but from what they did—from their reactions to everyday life as well as the manner in which they lived. The task of the disciple was to become as much like the rabbi as possible.”*

That’s exactly what Jesus has in mind for these twelve men.

And so here in our text, they are out of the shadows and in the spotlight of Mark’s attention. Jesus has been engaged in His ministry that was taking place around Capernaum in the region surrounding the Sea of Galilee. He had been teaching in the synagogue, and they heard Him teach. He had been announcing the good news about the kingdom, and they listened carefully. He’s been ministering to all the crowds, and we see that in verses 6-12. And now He will officially call these twelve to a place of closer discipleship and apostleship before He will eventually send them out on their own to minister and to preach with His authority. And though the authority and specific mission of the Twelve was unique in the sense that they were apostles, you and I can still gain some important insights as it relates to our own understanding of discipleship today.

And so I want to point out some helpful principles about the ‘Master’s Men:’

1—They were CALLED (3:13)

“And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those whom He desired, and they came to Him.”

Throughout Jesus's ministry, He was surrounded by huge crowds pressing in on Him, invading His personal space, demanding ministry from him, especially healings. Most of them seemed far less interested in His preaching than they did in getting their bodies healed or getting their stomachs full. They're desperate only for physical healing, not really aware of what their greatest need was—the salvation of their soul. In many ways, they represent the vast mission field of the world, the millions upon millions of lost people who need forgiveness far more than they need any earthly thing, more than they need physical healing, more than they need material prosperity, more than they need their stomachs filled with bread, and more than they need any earthly blessing. Forgiveness of their sins, reconciliation to God, that's what they need. Yet Jesus ministered to them with compassion. Matthew's gospel account says:

Matthew 9:36-38—“When He saw the crowds, He had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’”

And I find it interesting that in the very next verse, we find Matthew's account of the twelve apostles. It is the parallel account to what Mark says here. In the midst of this busy time of ministry when the crowds had been pressing in all around Jesus, He calls these twelve men who will be His representatives. Verse 13 says, “And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those whom He desired, and they came to Him.” Luke's account puts it this way:

Luke 6:12-13—“In these days He went out to the mountain to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples and chose from them twelve, whom He named apostles.”

He spends the night in prayer, and I find this convicting! If the perfect Son of God took time in prayer before making a vital decision, how dare you and I be prayerless before the big decisions of our lives? Essentially, we're saying, "I got this one, God. I know what to do." There's no wonder we often make a mess of things. When we're weak, then we're strong because we take it to the Lord in prayer. Jesus spent all night in communion with the Father, then He called to Himself the men He wanted.

He had told them to pray to the Lord of the harvest to 'send out' laborers, and now that's what He is doing. He spends all night in prayer and communion with the Father before He calls and officially commissions the twelve. And they are going to be the answer to His prayer. So He 'calls' them. And they respond to His call.

John Phillips — *"He called, and they came. This balance always exists in God's dealings with men. God will woo, but He will not ravish. He will invite, but He will not invade."*

In the same way, God calls men and women today by His Spirit. You may hearing His call even now. But you must respond to that call! That's why I always give an invitation for men and women to receive Christ in faith. It provides an opportunity for you to respond to what God is doing in your life. A second thing I want you to see is:

2— They were APPOINTED (3:14-16a)

"And He appointed twelve (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. He appointed the twelve..."

Not only were these men called by Jesus, but notice that they are appointed by Him to serve in a unique capacity. And some of these men had been with Him from the very beginning—Peter and Andrew, James and John. Earlier, Jesus had called them away from their fishing enterprise to follow Him and He would make them fishers of men. And so there seems to be a progression involving their initial contact. Some of the disciples first met Jesus and became interested in Him. Then, there is a call to discipleship as Jesus called them to leave their former lives and follow Him closely. And then finally, there is an official appointment as apostles. Jesus officially chooses twelve men out of the larger group of disciples for special training and ministry to the masses.

Notice in verses 14-15 their three-fold appointment:

- That they might be with Him (closeness to Jesus)
- And He might send them out (commission from Jesus)
- And have authority (controlled by Jesus)

They were appointed to be with Him, to study under Him, to watch Him up close, and learn from Him. And the purpose was so that they would be sent out by Him to preach and have authority to cast out demons. And later manuscripts include the statement ‘to have power to heal sicknesses.’ They were to sent out with the Lord’s power and authority to do what He had been doing. The message was primary while the miracles were secondary.

Out of all those that followed Him, verse 14 says that Jesus appointed twelve. Jesus had to have a strategy so that His message would be taken to the world after His death and resurrection. And so selecting the disciples was not simply to spread the load, but to spread the message, and He did it by choosing these

twelve men. This was Christ's method for ministry, and it involved twelve men. The apostles are the foundation of the church that would come. Paul says:

Ephesians 2:20-21 — **“The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him, the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.”**

Hopewell, the church that you and I are part of now, is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets according to the Scriptures. The apostles were called and appointed by Jesus.

E.M. Bounds — *“Men are God's method. The Church is looking for better methods; God is looking for better men.”*

Robert Coleman — *“His concern was not with programs to reach the multitudes, but with men whom the multitudes would follow. Remarkable as it may seem, Jesus started to gather these men before He ever organized an evangelistic campaign or even preached a sermon in public. Men were to be His method of winning the world to God. The initial objective of Jesus' plan was to enlist men who could bear witness to His life and carry on His work after He returned to the Father.”*

Now, who were they? Well, they were twelve in number which is not without its significance. There were twelve tribes of Israel, twelve thrones for judgement on the twelve tribes of Israel, Revelation tells us that there are twelve pearly gates in the New Jerusalem, twelve foundations to that same city, and there will be twelve manner of fruits to eat from in the new heaven and the new earth. And so the number 'twelve' is very significant. I like what one person has said:

Andy Davis — *“Jesus’ choice of them was most certainly based on His knowledge of them, His knowledge of their hearts and in what they would become. Out of all the crowd that was following Him, He knew all of them, all of them individually and perfectly.”*

John 1:47-49 — **“Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!’ Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ Jesus answered him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’ Nathanael answered Him, ‘Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’”**

How foolish we are to think that we can hide from Him! Friends, He is the One who has eyes of blazing fire and feet of burnished bronze. He sees us and knows us, and Nathanael is blown away. The only thing left to do is bow before Him and respond to His call. The very same thing is true for you now.

They are called, and they are appointed. Then notice:

3—They were ORDINARY (3:16b-17)

“Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter); James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder)...”

Now, there are four lists of the apostles that we are given in Scripture, and this list in Mark is one of those. You will find the others in Matthew 10, Luke 6, and Acts 1 (**see graphic on the screen**). When you’re reading them, they all seem to be the same. But as you look at them in greater detail, you’ll notice that they differ somewhat. For instance, both Mark and Matthew have the name ‘Thaddeus’ in the list, while Luke and Acts have the name ‘Judas son of James.’

Of course, it is the same person, and some scholars think that Judas may have been his original name and he later changed it to 'Thaddeus' which means 'warmhearted.' It may have been to avoid the stigma that had been attached to the name 'Judas' because of Judas Iscariot. Good reason for a name change!

Something else is that all four lists in Scripture begin with Simon Peter. And they all end with Judas Iscariot except, that is, Acts, because Judas by that time had killed himself. Also, you see that these four lists appear in three groups of four names. Peter, Andrew, James and John are always in the first group. Philip, Bartholomew (Nathaniel in John's gospel), Thomas, and Matthew are always in the second group. James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot are always in the third group. I think that is interesting. In all four lists mentioned in the Bible, Peter's name always heads the first group. Philip always heads up the second group, and James always heads up the third group. You may think that is a helpful way to remember all their names.

But Peter is always mentioned first in the lists of the apostles that we find in the New Testament. He seems to have been a natural born leader—impulsive, outspoken, and quick to make a decision. Keep in mind that Mark writes his gospel from Peter's perspective. Together with James and John, they formed a trio, sort of an inner circle among the twelve disciples. The three of them were chosen on several occasions to see glimpses of Christ that were not shown to the others, such the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Notice who is not in the group. There's no Hercules, or no Superman. There's no one with connections. No religious leaders from Jerusalem, no men of degree. No one from the aristocracy or the wealthy upper class. Instead, what we find mentioned are some blue-collar workers. There's Peter, James, and John. Then there's Andrew, Philip, and Bartholomew. Then Matthew, Thomas,

and James the son of Alphaeus. And then there's Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot. Judas is always mentioned last in the list of the apostles. Just some ordinary men with ordinary names from ordinary backgrounds. And they are completely unremarkable in every way.

Robert Coleman—*“None of them occupied prominent places in the Synagogue, nor did any of them belong to the Levitical priesthood. For the most part they were common laboring men, probably having no professional training beyond the rudiments of knowledge necessary for their vocation...None of them could have been considered wealthy. They had no academic degrees in the arts and philosophies of their day. By any standard of sophisticated culture then and now they would surely be considered as a rather ragged [bunch] of souls.”*

One might wonder how in the world Jesus could ever even use them! They were impulsive, inconsistent, immature—not the kind of group one would expect to win the world for Christ. Yet Jesus saw in them the potential of leadership for this kingdom enterprise of which we are a part today.

They are common men with an uncommon calling. In other words, the task they were called to is what made them so important. It wasn't anything about the men, but what the Lord would do through in and through their witness. And not only would they become the founders of the church and play a key leadership role in the early church. But think of how they would become the instrumentation through which most of the New Testament would be given. They received truth from God by means of divine revelation. It is this very thing which Paul mentions:

Ephesians 3:5—“The mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.”

And of course the ‘mystery’ to which he refers is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the same promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. That’s what the apostles preached. Everything we are talking about this morning has been revealed by God through their witness and instruction. Acts 2:42 says that the church ‘continued steadfastly’ in the apostles’ doctrine. So that the New Testament is their written record, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and authoritative for us in terms of our faith and practice.

4— They were IMPERFECT (3:18-19)

“Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.”

These men were called, appointed, and ordinary. And yet I also think that it is important for us to point out the fact that these men were far from perfect. Peter? He was impulsive and prone to put his foot in his mouth. James and John? They were hot-tempered and quick on the draw. Matthew? He had been a tax collector. They were immature at times, arguing about who among them was the greatest. Another thing that we typically don’t think about is their youthful age at the time. Perhaps as young as their late teens and early twenties. Robby Gallaty (“Rediscovering Discipleship”) has argued for why this was the case. He mentions several reasons:

- Description

Jesus chose two terms to describe His disciples. A term ‘mikronos’ which means little ones (Matt. 10:42), and ‘teknion’ which means little children (John 13:33).

- Training

The Jewish Mishnah outlined the system for training where Scripture study begins at age 5, Mishnah at 10, obligations to the Torah at 13, continual rabbinical study at 15 if one was chosen to be tutored by a formal teacher. Marriage typically happened by 18, and formal teaching at 30.

- Itinerant travel

Most disciples of Jewish rabbis began traveling with the rabbi at the age of 15 or 16. We know that Jesus' disciples had left their jobs and families behind, and were therefore young men.

- Marital Status

We know that Peter was married because his mother-in-law is mentioned back in Mark 1:30. And yet there is no evidence that the others were married yet.

- Temple Tax

According to Exodus 30, the temple tax was required at Passover from every Jewish male aged 20 and older. We have record of only two of the men paying it — Jesus and Peter. Jesus tells Peter in Matthew 17:27 to go to the sea and cast a hook and take the first fish that comes up, and when he opens its mouth he will find a shekel. Jesus says, "Take that and give it to them for me and for yourself." So it could be that the other disciples were not yet 20.

- Longevity

Early Christian tradition concerning the apostles support the idea that they were young men. Due to the length of their ministries after Jesus' death and resurrection and the late dates of both Peter and John's epistles, it can assume the disciples were young adults when Jesus appoints them.

- Immaturity

The disciples exemplified behavior characteristic of young men. Whether it was arguing over who is the greatest, or unawareness that a devil was living among them for three years, their inability to grasp theological truths, or perhaps their fearfulness on two occasions of storms on the sea, it all points to the likelihood that they are young men. And by the way, most mothers don't speak up for their adult sons about seating assignments at supper, but that's what the mother of James and John did in Matt. 20:20! And so it all helps make sense of why Jesus had to teach them again and again. (Can I get an 'amen' from anyone with teenage sons?)

Robby Gallaty — *“A ‘teenager’ of the first century world would be nothing like a teenager living today. We still consider young teens to be children in our culture. At the same time, it is worth challenging our cultural norms here. Perhaps we should consider entrusting younger men and women with ministerial duties. Some of the ripest believers for discipleship may be younger adults who are in this stage of life: moldable, shapeable, flexible, and available with a future discipleship ministry of many years still ahead of them.”*

Remember what Paul had to say to another young man:

1 Timothy 4:12—“Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”

Throughout church history, many of the most significant revival movements have begun with young people! Again and again, God has used students, teenagers, and young adults who were spiritually hungry, willing to step out, and bold enough to obey Him when the older generations had grown complacent. While

revivals always involve people no matter the age, young people have often served as the catalyst or the spark.

I know I've talked a lot about George Whitefield. But he was only 24 when began his legendary preaching tours across the American colonies. Colleges such as Yale University and Princeton University became centers of spiritual awakening as their students gathered for prayer, repentance, and missionary zeal. In 1806, a small group of college students from Williams College in Massachusetts met for prayer during a thunderstorm under a haystack. It was out of that experience known as the 'Haystack Prayer Meeting' that their burden for world missions helped launch the modern missionary movement in America. Six years later they would send Adoniram Judson to Burma. Young men with very little influence at the time ended up shaping global Christianity.

And then there's Evan Roberts who was only in his mid-twenties and became burdened for spiritual awakening and devoted himself to prayer, often asking God to 'bend' the people of Wales in repentance and obedience. The revival began in 1904 and quickly spread through churches and coal-mining communities as thousands gathered to worship and confess sin, and prayer. Services often lasted late into the night. In time, an estimated 100,000 people professed faith in Christ, and the movement influenced revival efforts around the world. The movement spread rapidly because young people carried the gospel into schools, workplaces, and communities. What might God be doing in our time?

And so we shouldn't glamorize the twelve disciples. More than being a list of twelve saints, they're more like the dirty dozen when Jesus calls them Himself! They are young men with human faults and failings that characterize all our lives. Someone may say, "Then why did Jesus choose them?" They were chosen by Him not because of what they were, but because of what they would become by

His grace. And that is how it always is! Ephesians 3:5 refers to them as ‘holy’ apostles. They set a standard for godliness and true spiritual growth. Yes, they were imperfect men in the rough when Jesus called them. But they didn’t remain that way. They grew in grace and in terms of their character, so that they would be examples for the early church. And they would go on to become the channels through which God gave us the New Testament. Also, think of this—they would all go on to be martyred for the sake of their faith in Christ.

But, let’s stop to think about this for a minute. All that these men would one day become was nowhere in their minds on the morning when Jesus came to recruit them. They’re not even diamonds in the rough yet. They’re still just chunks of coal. All their shortcomings and human failings seemed to overshadow their potential. Yes, they had abandoned their nets, forsaken their fields, and left their tax tables behind to follow Jesus. But at this point they had absolutely no idea where He would take them, and how He would train them in that for which they had no natural aptitude.

5—They were EMPOWERED (Acts 1:8)

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

What kind of men were the disciples? They were men who were called and appointed though ordinary and imperfect. And what made all the difference in their lives is the power with which they would be clothed. They were empowered men, not men who went out to face the world in their own feeble strength. This power would not fully become theirs until after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Think about where things stood the moment Jesus was crucified. These

men were nowhere to be found. Judas defected and betrayed Jesus. Peter had denied knowing Him. The others had all fled. Only John is at the foot of the cross, to whom Jesus entrusts the care of His mother. And simply looking on, you would think that the last three and half years had all been for naught. It had all ended in failure. Even after the resurrection, it is the women who followed Jesus that went first to the tomb and bring back word to these timid disciples of all they had seen. But friends, there is something that happens by the time we make it to the book of Acts! Jesus ascends, and His Spirit descends, indwelling these timid and ordinary men. The result is that they are infused with divine power that enables them to do what Jesus had commissioned them to do.

Pay attention to how the people of Jerusalem perceived the apostles:

Acts 4:13—“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”

The language Luke uses there is strong and suggests how the disciples were unlikely witnesses. It is pretty blunt:

“Uneducated and Untrained” — *literally ἀγράμματοί καὶ ἰδιῶται or ‘ungrammar-ed idiots’*

No formal training. No credentials. Just a couple of guys who spent the last three and a half years with the Son of God, who now were indwelt by the presence of God, and baptized in the power of God! The crowd marvels at their testimony, though they were uneducated and untrained. But here is the secret of their power—‘and they realized that they had been with Jesus.’

What a powerful statement! ‘They realized they had been with Jesus.’

I wonder what other people realize when they take a look at our lives? Is it obvious to others that we've been with Jesus lately? If education was what it takes to win the world, the world would have been won many times over by now. There's no shortage of men of degree. If finances or branding or ingenuity was what it takes to win the world, again there would be no problem. There's a ton of money, clever marketing strategies, and no shortage of consultants these days. And yet the world remains lost and without Christ. What turned the first century world upside down? The better question is 'who' turned it upside down. The answer is men who had been with Jesus!

Why have I spent so much time looking at this list of names in Mark 3? Because I believe we've done a disservice to ourselves when all we do is glamorize the disciples and make them 'unlike' us. Don't get me wrong, I believe we respect them for their faithfulness to God and the unique office they held in church history. But at the end of the day, they were no different from you or me. They were ordinary, hard-working young men who responded to the invitation from the Master. And it was an invitation that would lead to their changing the world. Think about it—Jesus bypassed the theological institutions of Jerusalem, the wealthy cities of Jericho and Caesarea Maritime, the intellectual and religious sects of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and He called twelve very average men to follow Him. Aren't you glad that Jesus still extends the same invitation to average people like us today? Yes!

And so the key verse of our text this morning might very well be verse 14—“And He appointed twelve (whom He also named apostles) so that they might be with Him and He might send them out to preach and have authority.” Being with Jesus and being empowered by Jesus is what made the difference in their lives. It will make all the difference in our lives as well.

Kent Hughes — *“Wavering, inconsistent Simon became Peter, the rock. John and James became Boanerges, the ‘Sons of Thunder—dynamic apostles! Anonymous, average Andrew became the patron saint of three nations. Thomas the skeptic became a tenacious man of faith. Simon, the radical, subversive zealot, became a man truly zealous for God. Loathsome Levi became the writer of the Gospel of the Son of Man.”*

Such is the change that Jesus produces in the life of the person who trusts in Him. Though we’re beset with failure and weakness, and though we are far from the perfect men and women that we long to be, we trust that God’s grace is sufficient for us. And as the apostle John himself writes in:

1 John 3:2—“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.”

And such hope is incentive in our lives to run our race with endurance, to press toward the goal of maturity in Christ.