

## Lesson 17 - Luke 6:12-19

*“Calling the Twelve; Caring for Crowds”*

March 22, 2009

## Introduction

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.”*

*Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.”*

*(John 1:1-5)*

In our journey through the Gospel of Luke we are really trying to pay close attention to who this Person Jesus really is! We are beginning with the assumption that He is in fact the Central Character in salvation history and so we are seeking to use all of our senses as we observe Him in action in the writing of Dr. Luke.

The passage we read in John is probably one of the most succinct passages in all of the Gospels that makes the claim that Jesus was different than any other human born into the world; that He was around before the creation of the world and John even uses the language to say to us that He is in fact God and that He was an integral player in the creation of the universe.

I want us to begin with this big picture reminder of the identity of Jesus because as we approach our text today, we observe a shift in Luke’s writing. Over the past several weeks we’ve seen Luke recording for us how in fact Jesus has been making Himself known to the religious sceptics. Jesus had in fact been making some startling claims regarding this big picture of His identity. The most startling claim has been His claim to forgive sins – the obvious question is, ‘who can forgive sins but God alone?’ In a more subtle way, Jesus uses the picture of a bridegroom being with His bride to describe His presence with His followers – in the minds of the Old Testament specialists this would have been an allusion to the only in which this picture is used, namely, to describe God’s presence with His people. The whole tone of Jesus interaction with the religious leaders has been one of confrontation. It has been important for Jesus to make clear to the guardians of the institution of faith that He did not come into the world as another religious leader. His claims are far bigger than that and the reaction by the religious leaders was vehement and hostile. They are looking for a way to get rid of Him.

Now, Luke describes a shift of focus. Jesus turns from his dealing with the Pharisees and directs His attention to His followers. As He does this we notice a significant change in tone. How can we describe the tone of the next few sections of Luke as Jesus looks directly to His followers?

- **Compassionate & Inviting**
- **Challenging, Direct & very Pointed**

Starting next Sunday we will begin a 3 week mini-series on what we call the ‘sermon on the plain’ here in Luke’s text which bears many similarities to what we call the ‘sermon on the mount’ in Matthew’s Gospel. In those times together we will seek to make sense of the words of Jesus as Luke records them for us. Today, however, we simply seek to observe some actions of Jesus that will challenge our thinking about our perceptions of Jesus and how that should make a difference in the way in which I live my life right now in 2009.

In the verses read to us earlier, I observe 3 actions of Jesus from which I believe we can learn lessons.

- **Jesus Prays – we learn to pray**
- **Jesus Chooses – we listen for His calling**
- **Jesus Ministers – we marvel at His compassion**

#### 1. **Jesus Prays – we learn to pray**

- a. In what seems to be a straightforward, almost understatement of fact, Luke records: “*One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.*”
- b. Last fall as we began this series and were doing an overview of the features of this book we noted that prayer plays a significant role in Luke’s portrayal of Jesus. Especially at each major junction of Jesus’ earthly experience we see Him taking time away from the busyness of life to pray.
- c. But let’s ask a question about what we observe here:
  - i. Why does Jesus need to pray? If He really is who He is claiming to be – the One who has authority to forgive sins and be the Lord of the Sabbath; if He really is the One that John’s Gospel declares Him to be – the Word who is God made flesh; then why in the world did Jesus need to spend such significant time in prayer to God??

- d. I would suggest 2 possible answers to that question:
- i. To show us the interdependent nature of His relationship with God the Father
  - ii. To model for His followers their need for prayer
    1. The nature of the relationship between a rabbi and his disciples in those days was such that a disciple of a particular rabbi would “*willingly [leave] home, family, and occupation to be with the rabbi because he wanted more than anything else in the world to be like the rabbi (teacher) in his walk with God.*”<sup>1</sup>
    2. And so Jesus was very anxious to show by example early on in his public ministry that prayer was an important part of the dynamic of a relationship with the living God.
    3. By the time we get to chapter 11 of Luke, we will find the disciples begging Jesus to ‘teach them to pray’.
- e. The question that comes down to us, of course, is: “if it was so important for Jesus to take time away from the other stuff of life to spend focused time in conversation with His Father before a major life decision, why is it not more of a practice in our lives??”
- i. I wonder how many of us have ever spent a whole night in prayer??
  - ii. On the night I asked Barb to marry me, I went home and spent the whole night awake. I wish I could say that it was an intentional and spiritual decision to spend the night in prayer... actually it was probably more of a sense of panic – ‘what have I just done!?’; ‘I have just committed my whole life to one person!’ Looking back, of course, I realize that it was the 2<sup>nd</sup> best decision I have ever made in my life!
  - iii. On one occasion in Uzbekistan a group of us stayed up all night to pray about the situation in the country during that last night of the feast of Ramadan – a ‘night of power’ when a lot of spiritual forces are at work.
  - iv. But the reality is, that we don’t often show the same kind of commitment to prayer that Jesus did.
  - v. I believe we need to be challenged again by this observation of the actions of Jesus.
- f. Each month we are giving you an opportunity to sign up to cover 1 or more hours of prayer as we commit to pray on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of each month.

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<sup>1</sup> Ray Vander Laan, *In the Dust of the Rabbi* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 17.

- i. If it is really true that we learn to pray by praying then let me urge us to pay attention to the example of Jesus and make focused prayer a more regular part of our pattern of life.

## 2. Jesus chooses – we listen for His calling

- a. Luke goes on to record for us here how Jesus calls a group of *disciples* together who according to the flow of the text had gone up the mountain with Him and likely had slept the night away while Jesus was praying; and from that group Jesus chooses 12 to be *apostles*.

- i. Disciple = pupil; learner

- ii. Apostle = one who is sent or commissioned; ambassador

1. these 12 would ultimately be the ones who were meant to ensure that the message of the kingdom of God which Jesus came to bring would carry on forward following His departure from this earth.

- b. Who were these apostles and what can we learn from this list?

- i. First I need you to close your bibles in order to play “Name that Apostle” – how many can you name??

Simon Peter	Philip	James son of Alphaeus
Andrew	Bartholomew	Simon the Zealot
James	Matthew	Judas son of James (Thaddeus)
John	Thomas	Judas Iscariot

- ii. The POINT of this exercise? To show clearly that these were pretty ordinary folks who even after being called by Jesus did not individually make great waves in human history.
- iii. Some of you may have heard this fictitious management report:

*To: Jesus, Son of Joseph  
Woodcrafter's Carpenter Shop  
Nazareth 25922*

*From: Jordan Management Consultants*

*Dear Sir:*

*Thank you for submitting the resumes of the twelve men you have picked for managerial positions in your new organization. All of them have now taken our battery of tests; and we have not only run the results through our computer, but also arranged personal interviews for each of them with our psychologist and vocational aptitude consultant.*

*The profiles of all tests are included, and you will want to study each of them carefully.*

*As part of our service, we make some general comments for your guidance, much as an auditor will include some general statements. This is given as a result of staff consultation, and comes without any additional fee.*

*It is the staff opinion that most of your nominees are lacking in background, education and vocational aptitude for the type of enterprise you are undertaking. They do not have the team concept. We would recommend that you continue your search for persons of experience in managerial ability and proven capability.*

*Simon Peter is emotionally unstable and given to fits of temper. Andrew has absolutely no qualities of leadership. The two brothers, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, place personal interest above company loyalty. Thomas demonstrates a questioning attitude that would tend to undermine morale. We feel that it is our duty to tell you that Matthew had been blacklisted by the Greater Jerusalem Better Business Bureau; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus definitely have radical leanings, and they both registered a high score on the manic-depressive scale.*

*One of the candidates, however, shows great potential. He is a man of ability and resourcefulness, meets people well, has a keen business mind, and has contacts in high places. He is highly motivated, ambitious, and responsible. We recommend Judas Iscariot as your controller and right-hand man. All of the other profiles are self-explanatory.*

*We wish you every success in your new venture.*

*Sincerely,*

*Jordan Management Consultants<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Tim Hansel, *Eating Problems for Breakfast*, Word Publishing, 1988, pp. 194-195

- c. In contrast to this Leon Morris in his commentary helps us understand that: *“Jesus never set up an organization. These twelve men represent the total of His administrative machinery. Some of them were clearly outstanding men, but on the whole they seemed to have been no more than average. Most have left very little mark on church history. Jesus preferred to work, then as now, through perfectly ordinary people.”*<sup>3</sup>
- d. In fact, as we follow the story through the Gospels we find that these perfectly ordinary people did not have a great track record! Apart from some highlight moments like Peter declaring ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God’ we mostly see these 12 ordinary people not catching on to the whole idea of the kingdom of God very quickly. Even as Jesus is approaching the time of his death we find them arguing of which of them would be greatest in the kingdom!
- i. It is only after Jesus resurrection when the Spirit of God comes upon them that they begin to shine as leaders in the book of Acts.
- e. Perhaps the most disturbing line in Luke’s record here is: “Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”
- i. We must ask ourselves at this point – could not this One who is able to forgive sin, this One whom John describes as the One who is God the Creator come in flesh – could not this One have prevented this from happening?? Surely He knows the end from the beginning – why didn’t He see this coming and choose some different?
- f. There are no easy or pat answers for such questions but the observation we cannot help but make in this scenario is this:
- i. Jesus chooses people to be His followers and messengers are neither specially gifted nor perfect.
- g. By looking at the whole story of Scripture we can say with certainty today that Jesus is still looking for followers and messengers.
- i. Perhaps you feel disqualified to be a servant of Jesus today – either you feel you just aren’t gifted enough or you feel like there is too much sin in your life.
  - ii. Each one of us needs to be encouraged by the fact that Jesus chose this motley crew of not-so-well-known men and they later in their lives turned the world upside down by their faith in the risen Jesus.

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<sup>3</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel of Luke*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), 125

- h. Jesus is calling each one of us to be His faithful followers and messengers – are we hearing His call in our lives?? Or are we too caught up in our own agendas?
- i. So far:
  - i. Jesus prays – we learn to pray
  - ii. Jesus chooses – we listen for His calling

### 3. **Jesus ministers – we marvel at His compassion**

- a. Luke tells us that Jesus goes down from the mountain where He had prayed and where He had called His disciples ‘to a level place’. He is about to teach the crowd that gathered there from all across the country but first we read this:
  - i. *“Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all”* (18b-19)
- b. We know from reading the rest of the Gospels that Jesus did not always heal everyone who came across His path that was sick. However, in this instance, Luke tells us that Jesus healed everyone He came in contact with that day.
  - i. Why does He do this??
- c. I believe we need to see that Jesus has turned his focus away from the Pharisees and is now attentive to his newly named apostles and the rest of the followers. The tone has changed. Instead of proving his identity by confrontation as He had with the resistant Pharisees, He now overwhelms His followers with extravagant acts of healing and compassion.
  - i. Jesus is about to teach these people some things which might be hard for them to hear – He is now preparing them by showing them without a doubt that He not only has the power and authority from God to heal sickness and cast out demons, but He also displays a seemingly endless display of compassion toward the sick, the downtrodden and the demonized.
- d. Before their eyes He is living out His mandate:
  - i. *“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to preach good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,  
to release the oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”*

e. We too marvel at His compassion as we observe His actions.

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### **Conclusion**

And so our observations of Jesus this morning have led us to 3 actions:

- We learn to pray as He prayed
- We listen for His voice, His calling in our lives even when we feel unworthy
- We marvel at His compassion. We are moved to worship this One who is the Creator of all things and yet who comes close to us and pours out His heart of love, compassion and healing on those who are sick and downtrodden.

All of this then prepares our hearts to hear what Jesus is about to say in the Sermon on the Plain – for which you will have to return next week...!