

Series: Reintroducing Jesus
Text: Luke 6:12-16 part 2
May 31, 2015: Gospel Community Study Guide

This Study Guide is based on a sermon by Dr. Joshua Mack. You will find the link to the sermon here.

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?sid=6415544144>

Getting Started:

If you had to make a list of the most influential individuals who have ever lived, I wonder whose names you would write down?

This evening we are going to think together about 12 men whose lives are some of the important in the history of the universe. I am talking about of course about the apostles.

Can you think of any proofs of the apostles' importance?

I am sure there are many proofs we might give. (Like the fact that we are sitting here today talking about them!) But one proof that stands out to me is found in Revelation 21:14. Here we see when God wraps up everything that has happened in the history of the world and draws it to its great conclusion by bringing the new Jerusalem down out of heaven, the wall of that city will have twelve foundations, and on those twelve foundations, God is going to write these men's names. That is obviously pretty important! If your name is written on the foundation of the wall of the eternal city!

The Big Idea:

In spite of how important these men are in the history of salvation, they in and of themselves are very ordinary. The better we get to know them, the more encouraged we will be about the kind of God we serve and even about the extraordinary ways He can work through ordinary people like us.

Into the Text:

Before we talk much about the apostles themselves, I want us to consider a very important spiritual principle. Turn in your Bible to 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.

Have someone read this passage out loud and then answer the following questions:

What kind of people did God call to himself? What were they not according to this passage? What were they?

Why did God choose people like this? What was his goal in going about things this way?

We see certainly this illustrated in Jesus' calling of the disciples. He did not choose the elite of this world to serve in this important foundational work in the church. They had some pretty serious deficiencies. Let's look at some passages that highlight some of their failings.

Mark 9:30-32: How would you summarize what this passage teaches about what the apostles lacked?

Mark 9:33-37: What are the disciples arguing about? What had they just been told by Jesus? What does this story illustrate about them?

Mark 4:40 and Mark 16:14: Mark 4:40 is towards the beginning of the apostles' journey and Mark 16 is towards the end. What did they lack in both stories?

Mark 14:50: What do we find the apostles doing here? What does that tell us about them?

Acts 4:13: What do we discover about the apostles here?

Knowing what you know now about these disciples and their deficiencies, imagine that you were having to advise Jesus about choosing these men, what reasons might you be tempted to give Jesus as to why He shouldn't select these particular men to be his representatives in this great work?

Bringing it Home:

One reason I am reminding you of how ordinary the apostles were is because we often look at people who do significant things for God and think that God couldn't use us because we are not as gifted or as unique as they were. This can even become an excuse for us not trying.

"I would do that, but I can't, because I am not like so and so..."

John MacArthur explains,

"I think we are tempted generally as Christians, and it's an understandable thing, to become discouraged and to become disheartened when our spiritual life and witness suffer because of our sins and our failures and we think that we're nobodies and we're nothing. You know, we crawl up a few steps and it's kind of three steps forward, two steps back and we battle temptation and we go through all of this and we wonder how it is that God could ever use us. And I am just here to remind you...that that's just standard fare, we're all the same and those are the kind of people God uses because that's all He has to work with.

Satan may even attempt to convince us that our shortcomings render us useless to God and His church, but His use of the Apostles testifies to the fact that God can use the unworthy and the unqualified. He can use the nobodies. They turned the world upside-down, these Twelve, but they did not turn the world upside-down because they were extraordinarily talented, or because they were naturally gifted, or because they were supremely educated or uniquely influential, or because they had achieved heights of social status. They did not turn the world upside-down because they were massive intellects. It was rather in spite of all their human limitations, in spite of everything that they were not that God used them because it was when they recognized they were nothing, they surrendered themselves to God whose power is always perfected in weakness. There are many people who are too confident to be any use to God, too proud to be of any use to God.

So God picks the humble, the lowly, the meek and the weak so that there's never any question about the source of power when their lives change the world. It's not the man, it's the truth of God and the power of God in the man. We sure need to remind preachers today of this. It's not their cleverness, it's not their personality. Power is in the Word...power is in the truth that we preach, not in us. And apart from one person, one human, God's Son the Lord Jesus Christ, the history of God's work on earth is the story of His using the unqualified and the Twelve were no exception to that.

Jesus took the unworthy, the unqualified and transformed them into mighty servants of spiritual power, turned the world upside-down, laid the foundation of the church upon which all these centuries have been built.

They became great preachers, healers, expellers of demons, writers of the New Testament. They were the real foundation of the church, according to Ephesians 2:20. They were the agents of divine revelation, according to Ephesians 3:5. They were the teachers of true doctrine, according to Acts 2:42. In Ephesians 4:11 it tells us they were the builders of the church. They are called holy apostles in Ephesians 3:5 and Revelation 18:20. They were examples of godliness. And they were granted the ability to do mighty signs and wonders, according to 2 Corinthians 12:11 and 12. These Twelve, very plain, common men were elevated to a uncommon calling.”

What does Dr. MacArthur say we are often tempted to think about ourselves?

How does he say that Satan often uses those thoughts?

What does God's use of the apostles tell us?

What was the cause of the apostles great influence?

What problem often keeps people from being of use to God?

Why does God pick the humble?

Apart from one person, the history of God's work on earth is the story of God using what kind of person?

Summing Up:

We are the unworthy and the unqualified who want to be shaped and molded by the Lord Jesus to be used like these early apostles. Let's give thanks to God that He called to Himself all different kinds of people to advance His Kingdom and He's so good at using mightily the unworthy and the unqualified and demonstrating Your glory in salvation, sanctification and service.

There's so much more we might say about the apostles. They were fascinating men! They came from very different backgrounds, had very different personalities, and yet God used them to accomplish great things for Him. We should be very grateful to God for these men. They died terrible deaths that we might know the gospel! We are here in part because of their great efforts on our behalf. I would encourage you to take some time to learn more about the apostles. One book you can use to do so is called *Twelve Ordinary Men*. You can even find much of this book for free at gty.org. Look it up! But for now, in what ways have you been encouraged by our study together this evening? What hope does this quick look at the apostles give you?