

Choosing the Twelve

12And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. 13And when day came, He called His disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: 14Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; 15and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; 16Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. 17And He descended with them, and stood on a level place; and there was a great multitude of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, 18who had come to hear Him, and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. 19And all the multitude were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all.

Western civilization. As the world gets smaller, suddenly we realize that the western world is distinctly different from eastern and southern culture.

In 1858, John G. Paton left Scotland behind him, and with his new wife headed for the south sea islands of the New Hebrides. He left civilized well ordered society to take the gospel of Jesus to cannibals. Real cannibals.

The story is one of the best pioneer missionary biographies ever written. His wife and newborn baby boy perished because they were forced to live in a swampy area that was riddled with disease. And after he survived that ordeal there were times when he was in such danger of cannibals that he hid out in trees and caves before he finally escaped.

3 years had gone by, with his life always in danger and the sorrows of losing his family. Chased around, robbed and beaten by cannibals with

the constant threat of his life. Almost zero conversions to Christ.

What was the difference between the wild men of that island and the well ordered civilized land he had left behind in Scotland? Well, we could say that Scotland in 1858 was perhaps at some sort of pinnacle of western civilization.

But why? Why cannibals one place and ordered civilized society in another? I believe the answer is in front of us this morning.

12 painfully ordinary men changed the world. Beginning in Israel, and moving up and around all the lands that bordered the mediteranean sea, all the way to Rome, and then to the wilds of Western Europe and Britain.

Western culture has it's basis in christianity, and by extension judaism. I am not saying everyone in western civilization is saved and heaven bound. Far from it. But I am saying, the culture that grew out of the first four centuries of christianity, and by direct extension, the moral law of God, the ten commandments given by God to Moses and the jews, that culture resulted in civilized men and order.

The difference between the most base and lawless debased culture imaginable and the civilized order of ladies and gentlement in Britain and Scotland was the result, ultimately if you study it, of Tyndale translating the greek and hebrew texts of the word of God into common english.

And then we can trace those greek and hebrew texts of the revealed words of God back all the way to 12 ordinary men, the apostles of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

We could push that even further and say, pinch yourselves, here we are, and we can trace the reason we're sitting here this morning studying this

book that changed the world from cannibalism to civilized order is because of those same 12 men.

Now, just in the last dozen years or less, all of that civilized culture is under challenge. Suddenly the culture, not perfect, mind you, I'm not saying it's perfect, but the civilized culture of the west is being challenged. Suddenly it's bad. We are now told to believe this culture that grew out of God's revealed moral order is the cause of harm, not good.

Suddenly, I'm the oppressor, the order given to us by the law of God is bad, and we're passing up the cannibals. Our culture is doing stuff the cannibals wouldn't do. We can't leave God and His revealed truth behind fast enough, and it's a race to be even more debased than the wild men of the south seas in 1858. But that's a story for another time. Just realize that's where we're headed.

12 ordinary men, turned the world upside down, and we are the direct, and perhaps the final recipients of the civilized order that can be traced directly back to the apostles of Jesus. And again, by extension to the jews who received Gods law.

Civilized order instead of chaos and debased evil comes from understanding that there is a God who created all things and that He is holy and He has shown men what holiness looks like and what sin looks like in His revealed truth, and He has told men He will judge unrighteousness.

Salvation is a different matter. Salvation from the chaotic evil that degenerates from the fall, is possible, purchased for us by Jesus. But even short of salvation, civilized order is present because for centuries and centuries men accepted the revealed law of God, the ten commandments as the basis for society. And society, culture grew out of the ten commandments being the norm, the standard for acceptable

living.

We look back in our own history and trace our civilized society, what's left of it, back to these 12 apostles Jesus will name in our passage this morning. There is a direct connection. Order and freedom were born in reformed christianity. We're about to lose all three.

We've been following the sequential order of Luke's history of Jesus and christianity, and this morning we're at a crossroad. At the end of last week's passage we saw that the conflict between the ruling false religion in Israel, and God's annointed Messiah was at the boiling point.

Mark 3; 6 And the Pharisees went out and immediately began taking counsel with the Herodians against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

The rulers of Israel, the elites, the Scribes and Pharisees, the Saducees and Herodians, are plotting how they will accomplish eliminating Jesus. They want Him dead. And we pick up our story in the 12th verse of Luke 6;

12 And it was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

And it was at this time. What time? The word used for time there is not the hour of the day. It's the word for epoch or perhaps era. It's a certain period of time. And what Luke is telling us is that the jews plotting Jesus death brought about the necessity for Jesus to choose the men who will carry on the work that He is beginning. *That* time.

It was in the plan of God before the foundations of the world that He would send His own Son to die for sins, our sins, and to raise Him from the dead on the third day, but with that work complete God calls His Son back up to His right hand, and the work He began, with His death, will

be carried on by other faithful men. Disciples who are apostles. Sent out ones.

And the way Jesus approaches the problem is to go off to some nearby un-named mountain and spend the night, the entire night, in prayer to God.

The way you choose 12 men who will leave the world a different place than it was when they found it, is to spend time in prayer to God.

Now our approach to this problem, select 12 men who will completely change the world, would be to line up all of the most brilliant and gifted men on earth. All of the Nobel prize winners. The most prized and gifted men of science and learning, and somehow try to ascertain who the 12 best of the best are.

But Jesus spent all night in prayer to God and he picks 12 men that are just about as painfully ordinary as it would be possible to find on earth. Not special. Far removed from special. Far removed from gifted. Ordinary.

But that doesn't surprise us, because God has told us, that's how He rolls. Listen to Paul explaining God's method of turning the world upside down to the Corinthians.

18 For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written,

*“I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE,
AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET
ASIDE.”*

God doesn't need the best and brightest, the most gifted, the prettiest.

20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of

this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

26 For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; 27 but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, 28 and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, 29 that no man should boast before God. 30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, 31 that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."

Jesus prays all night, and He comes down the mountain to choose 12 men who will turn the world upside down, and He doesn't go to Jerusalem and line up the Elite's. The Sanhedrin, the 70 top men, the Pharisees and the Scribes, the most learned elite of Israel.

That was what the jews expected messiah would do when He came. He would call a great convocation of the most elite of the elite of Israel, and choose His men. The best of the best.

No, the best of the best in their false apostate religion are scheming how to murder Him. Jesus goes up in the hills, north and east of Samaria, in the outback of Israel, where the hillbillies live, and He picks 12 guys that would impress . . . no one.

But that's exactly how God rolls. All through this book, He uses nobodies from nowhere to accomplish things that only God can accomplish.

I'll tell you a secret. Tonopah Nevada is sitting pretty if we were going to pick a place where God might go to find some nobodies to do impossible things that He would get all of the glory for. We're in a good spot.

Be ready. Tonopah's got everything going for it that Nazareth and Capernaum had. Bunch of non-descript nobodies living in fly-over land that no one thinks about. That's just how God rolls.

Jesus prays all night and picks the last 12 guys on earth anyone would think would be good candidates to leave the world a different place than it was when they began.

God doesn't need the elite's. He doesn't need the rock stars and the Nobel peace prize winners and the power brokers. He doesn't need the beautiful people. The movie stars. He's God. He can change the world, turn it upside down and inside out with 12 completely forgettable men. But they must be His men. Sold out to Him. Slaves . . . of God. Let's meet some of them.

13 And when day came, He called His disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:

First of all, let's consider a couple of distinctive terms in that verse. *He called His **disciples** to Him.*

Disciples simply means learners. Students. In Israel, learners would attach themselves to teachers and spend time. Learning. It was like college. Paul spends time at the feet of Gamaliel. He was a learner and

Gamaliel was a famous learned man who people followed and spent time learning from.

Jesus already has this going on. There are many disciples who want to spend time with Jesus, learning from the Master. Disciples are committed learners who are investing time to follow and learn. A cut above the folks who have come to experience His phenomenal oratory skill and see the miracles.

He calls His disciples, His dedicated learners together, and He chooses 12 men who will be apostles. OK, what are apostles. Apostolos. Our word is just the anglicized version of the greek.

An apostle is a sent out one. An ambassador that has authority given to them by the person who has sent them to accomplish the goals of their sender. They go in another's place to represent the person who sent them.

In that sense, in order to understand the word, I guess we could say Mike Pompeo is an apostle of Donald Trump. He is a "sent one" who has some authority to accomplish his sender's goals. That was the basic meaning of the word. But used biblically in our case this morning, there are other considerations attached.

In this case, these apostles are different from the common greek word. We could say they are apostles with a capitol A. There is a sense in which all of us are sent out ones. All of us have been commissioned by Jesus to take this message of good news to everyone. We are all sent out ones in that sense.

Jesus will give these Apostles the authority to build His church. They have the authority to receive and write the doctrines of the new covenant. They are missionaries who are writing the New Testament, the apostles and their close associates, wrote the inspired scriptures we

have today.

And God gave these apostles the power to perform miracles. They are doing something new. God is building His church, going to all nations, different from Judaism, and the miracles are the proofs that God is doing this. After the first century of christianity, with the demise of the apostles, the miracles ceased with them.

Jesus will be gone. Murdered, risen to life from the dead on the third day, and ascended back to His Father in heaven, and these 12 Apostles are the foundation of the new covenant, who will build His church, and they will write down the New Testament.

That task is world changing. Earth shattering. 12 men are going to march into Satan's world and call as many men out of this condemned world as will listen and believe. They will write down the doctrines that will set men free from the slavery and death of the sin of this fallen world.

12 guys are going to do that????!!! The old joke is that the angels asked Jesus, yikes, those losers?? What is plan B? And Jesus says, there is no plan B.

13 And when day came, He called His disciples to Him; and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:

Jesus came to accomplish redemption. To purchase men, out of this world, with His shed blood. But His plan to bring that redemption to the whole world, begins with these 12 men. 12 sent out ones. What could possibly go wrong?

14 Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; 15 and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the

Zealot; 16 Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

These 12 men are listed for us four times. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and again in Acts with Judas replaced by Matthias.

And in all four lists there are some similarities. They always appear in 3 groups of four. And in each list the same four people are in group one, group two, group three, although not always in the same order.

But the first person mentioned in each of the three groups always remains constant. As if that person is sort of the leader of that group.

Also there is a descending order from the men in the first group to the men in the last group as far as their proximity to Jesus and the glimpses we get into their personalities. We know a LOT about Peter, right. But we know absolutely nothing about the three men in group four.

We know about the final man in every list because he was a traitor. A defector. The most famous defector who ever lived. Judas. Just the name means a traitor. We name our kids Peter and James and John, but we don't name them Judas.

The men in group two get a mention or two. Just enough that we can sort of get an incomplete picture. And John the apostle, almost as if he feels those men got short shrifted a little bit, in his final gospel after the synoptic gospels, gives us a glimpse or two of the men in group 2.

So let's spend a minute or two on these names, the men who left the world a different place, a better place, that has come all the way down to us.

First in every list, is Peter. He's always front and center. Bold, proud, abrasive. A natural leader. A fun guy to be with because he's always

willing to charge in and make things happen. He's a natural positive energy. We love to be around people like Peter. They're fun to watch because they do the crazy bold thing that we probably wouldn't.

Peter is the un-challenged leader of the twelve. He's the most inquisitive. He's always asking questions. Remember, there are no dumb questions. Peter is curious about everything. And Peter has a giant heart. He loves Jesus, and all he really ever wants is to be as close to Jesus as he can get.

He does crazy stuff to be near Jesus. He walks on water to get to Jesus while the others stay in the boat waiting for Jesus to come to them. Impetuous, bold, way over-confident. A natural leader that Jesus molds into a Spirit led leader after He departs and the Holy Spirit comes.

Jesus takes that impetuous uncontrolled fearlessness that cuts off Malchus ear at the arrest of Jesus, and turns it with the Holy Spirit's control into the fearlessness that preaches to thousands at Pentecost.

And Peter keeps right on preaching in the face of danger and adversity and prison and beatings for the first 12 chapters of the church in the book of Acts. Chances are we wouldn't be here this morning looking into these scriptures if there was no Peter.

Next is Andrew, and Andrew is always attached to this group as Simon Peter's brother. He's the silent partner in the synergy of the reckless positive energy that is Peter.

It was Andrew, who having taken some sabbatical time away from fishing to go investigate and follow John the baptist and sit under his teaching, Andrew first discovers Jesus when John points to Him and says, Behold the Messiah.

Andrew is the quieter, godlier brother who was there learning from the

final prophet in Israel. He followed Jesus and then he does what we always always see Andrew doing, anytime he is mentioned. He brings Simon Peter to Jesus.

After that, ever and always, when we see Andrew, he's bringing someone, or some group into audience with the Saviour. He's the quiet strength and stability in the group that knows the answer is always in the presence of Jesus. And that's what he does. He brings people to Jesus, beginning with his brother, Simon.

I'm no Peter. But I've got an Andrew sitting back there, silently getting stuff done. Brothers are wonderful to have. Lucky me.

Next are James and John. Again two brothers. Jesus called them Boanerges which meant sons of thunder.

A case can be made by comparing different snippets that their mother, Salome, was sister of Mary the mother of Jesus. That makes these men cousins. Cousins that grew up in a different town. Jesus in Nazareth, and James and John, Peter and Andrew are all from Bethsaida which is a fishing village just where the Jordan river enters the sea of Galilee.

James and John are business partners with Simon and Andrew. They have moved over to Capernaum, a bigger place, and they are fishermen who combine forces in their fishing.

We don't get to know very much about James, because Herod had him killed early on. James was the first martyr of the church, very quickly after the beginnings at pentecost.

What we do know is from Jesus title for him and John. Sons of thunder. We get two glimpses of this duo with the brother synergy going on. One time we see them asking Jesus if they can call down fire from heaven to burn up the Samaritan village that rejected them on their way to

Jerusalem.

Nice. Can we burn those guys up? Please? The other time we see them in action together, they've got their mom, using the family angle, asking Jesus to grant a request. What is it? She wants here two sons to sit at Jesus right and left hand in the kingdom, that's what.

They've got mom, Salome, using the family connection to trump Peter or whoever else might get first positions at either side of Jesus. Wow. And of course that makes the other 10 guys angry. Sons of thunder pulling the family card.

They were rather ruthless. Bold loud men. The Spirit reigns that in, and James dies for his Lord, and John, well John we do know about, because he wrote lots of books about Jesus, and we get to know John through his writings.

John is remembered to us by his own accounting of himself, that he is the disciple Jesus loved. That's his title for himself. And of course we know Jesus loved them all, but John never gets beyond the amazement that Jesus could love him. That's how he always sees himself. Perhaps naturally un-lovable. But Jesus loved him.

John can outrun Peter. He's faster. But on resurrection morning, he gets to the tomb first, but it's Peter that goes on in while John has stopped at the door.

John has another quality that endears him to our memories and puts us in his debt. John loves the truth. John loves the logos. The word. And John puts that love into action, he writes books because he wants us to fall in love with the logos. He tells us Jesus is the logos. Truth and Jesus are interchangeable.

and Philip and Bartholomew; 15 and Matthew and Thomas;

These four men we know less about because they aren't front and center like the first four are. Peter and James and John are the inner circle that Jesus takes with Him when He raises the dead girl back to life, and when He goes up on the mount of transfiguration.

The next four are in the next circle out. Philip is the analyst. The mathematician, the calculator. He's the analyst who solves every problem with science. Jesus asks him where will we get bread for 5000 men with wives and children probably more like 20000. Philip is freaked out.

His answer, 200 days wages, 2/3's of a years salary wouldn't be enough to buy them all a morsel. He's always solving spiritual problems with the worlds solutions when we see him.

It's Andrew, who is in on it, that brings the lad with 2 fish and 5 loaves to Jesus. That's what Andrew does. Brings people to Jesus. And Jesus feeds 20000 + with the loaves and the fish.

Bartholomew, is also called Nathaniel. The names are interchangeable. And Nathaniel like Philip is also from Bethsaida. That's 6 of the 12 who probably grew up together and were fishermen together.

Philip tells Nathaniel we have found the messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and Nathaniel says "can anything good come our of Nazareth". His famous quote. An Israelite with no guile.

Matthew we know something about because of the story of the tax office and how he left his business behind to follow Jesus and the party he threw for all the other sinners to come to Jesus. But that's it. In his humility, Matthew never talks about Matthew again. He only wants to talk about Jesus.

We feel we know Matthew better than some others because of his gospel. We see his massive knowledge of the word of God in his book. His personality shines through on the pages he wrote for us.

And Thomas is forever, "doubting Thomas". Anytime we see him he's sort of like eeyore. He has this natural negative thing going on. He's the one that when they can't talk Jesus out of going back to Bethany where the jews were trying to kill Him a week ago, says, let's all go then and be killed.

And of course he's the one who is missing in the upper room after the resurrection and says he won't believe until he can put his finger in the holes in Jesus hand and side. Which he does a short time later. Then he believes and we get the famous quote. Blessed are those who have not seen, but yet believe.

James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; 16 Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Finally the outer circle. All we have to go on here is that Simon was a zealot. Those guys were the radicals. Terrorists for Israel. So it's rather marvelous that a terrorist nationalist and a traitor who sold the store to Rome so he could collect taxes are traveling together.

Only Jesus could neutralize that equation of polar opposites. We know nothing else of the men in this group, except the sad story of Judas Iscariot who sold Jesus to the jews to be crucified and who then committed suicide.

These eleven men, and later Matthias was added to replace Judas Iscariot, and even still later, Jesus selected Paul to also be an apostle, untimely born, these men took what Jesus began, and changed the world.

We're out of time this morning but in closing we will say that

christianity, God's called out ones, made sons by adoption, called out of Satan's fallen and condemned world, are the salt that has made the world survivable.

That island in the New Hebrides was an isolated window of society with no salt. Degradation and cannibalism. Wild uncivilized men. That is the difference that God's chosen people make in Satan's world.

What will the world be like when the salt is removed? You can read about it in the book of Revelation. Meanwhile, as the Lord tarries, we need to go out and be that salt that preserves this Godless world.