

The Servant's Servants
 Mark 3:7-19
 ABC 10/2/22

We haven't been in Mark since last April but are returning to it today. Mark has been giving us a series of short encounters between Jesus & the religious leaders. He's been going toe-to-toe with the scribes & Pharisees. Each encounter gets a little more intense. In spite of the miracles Jesus performed, the leaders grow more & more resentful toward Him. In Capernaum when He forgave the paralytic's sins & they accused Him of blasphemy, a sin punishable by death (2:7). When He called the tax-gatherer Levi to be one of His disciples, & followed that by eating with the dregs of Capernaum, the Pharisees were scandalized (2:16). Then they observed that He & His followers didn't observe their laws regarding fasting. Finally, there was the collision over the observance of the Sabbath, because Jesus' disciples picked & ate grain (2:24) & because Jesus healed a man's withered hand on it (3:2). Maddened with hatred, the religious leaders form an unholy alliance with the worldly Herodians & together they plot Jesus' death (3:6). The pressure on Jesus must have been immense. His every move was watched by enemies. The worst interpretation was placed on everything He said & did. Of course, Jesus knew what awaited Him at their hands, but it wasn't yet time. So He withdrew from Capernaum to the countryside along the seashore, where He'd be less vulnerable to their strategies & pressure. But the move had only limited success because of His popularity.¹

1. The Crowd While the religious elite respond to Jesus with wanting to kill Him, how's everyone else responding? Mark tells, **Mk 3:7-12**.

Clearly, the people are enamored with Jesus & amazed at what He's doing. His fame & popularity were increasing. Despite all the controversy with the muckety-mucks, He was gathering attention, popularity, & fame. The crowds became such that He **withdrew to the sea with His disciples** (7) & **told His disciples that a boat should stand ready for Him because of the crowd, so that they would not crowd Him** (10). Apparently, one of His disciples stayed close by in a small boat in case Jesus needed to get away from the crowd. Why is the crowd so large? Because, vs 8, the **people heard**

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Mark: Jesus, Servant & Savior*, vol. 1, Preaching the Word, pp 81-82

of all that He was doing & came to Him. Jesus' primary purpose was to preach the gospel, the necessity of repentance & belief (1:14-15). Physical healing was secondary. But the truth is, Jesus' words held little attraction for the multitudes. The overwhelming desire of the crowds wasn't for Jesus' message but for His healing. They wanted to be relieved of their pain & suffering. They were more concerned with their bodies than their souls.² What they wanted to experience & see were healings & other miracles that would benefit them personally.³ What does Mark tell us of this crowd? They are...

A. Diverse It includes a multitude from Galilee, which we would expect since that's where He's been teaching & interacting with people. Back in chpt 1 we read **1:28**.

In 1:38 everyone is looking for Him. In 1:45 they were coming to Him from everywhere. In 2:13 all the people were coming to Him. This is all in Galilee. This crowd is also coming from Judea, & from Jerusalem, & from Idumea, & beyond the Jordan, & the vicinity of Tyre & Sidon (8). Jesus is in the north in the Galilee. Judea is to the south where Jerusalem & the temple were located. Probably some of the religious leaders from Jerusalem had already come to Galilee to confront Jesus. They're also coming from Idumea which is even further south of Judea in the desert region more than 100 miles away. Idumeans were of the nation of Edom, the descendants of Esau. Next were people from beyond the Jordan. These people were from the east side of the Jordan. Finally, Mark mentions those from around Tyre & Sidon, which were Phoenician cities along the coast of the Mediterranean north of Galilee. Obviously, Jesus' fame is spreading. This is a diverse crowd containing Jews & Gentiles from a large area. Not only was the crowd diverse, it was also...

B. Determined We see this from the fact that they're traveling from so far. They weren't sitting back & waiting for Jesus to come to them. He's a celebrity & the fans & paparazzi are rushing Him. There was such a determination on the part of the crowd to see Jesus, that He had to ask for this boat in case He needed some separation from the people surrounding & pressing in against Him (9-10). In chpt 4 He'll get in the boat so He can separate Himself from this crowd & speak to them

² R.C. Sproul, *Mark*, First Edition, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary, p 58

³ Hughes, p 82

without being pressed on all sides. There's this potential threat of being crushed by this crowd. Why are they pressing in so tightly? Because He's doing things they've never seen before. He's healing all sorts of ...

C. Diseased people. In His compassion, Jesus healed the many people coming to Him with diseases & deformities which only caused the people to press against Him even more eagerly, hoping to touch Him & be healed. Not only is this crowd diverse, determined, & diseased. There are also...

D. Demonized people in this crowd (11-12). Unclean spirits or demon-possessed people are present reacting to Jesus. Mark earlier noted Jesus' ability to command evil spirits as a sign of His authority (1:27). There an evil spirit identified Him as **Jesus of Nazareth & the Holy One of God** (24). Here, again, Mark tells how the spirits behaved & what they said when Jesus cast them out. Though demons prefer to hide, masquerading as angels of light (2 Cor 11:14), they were unable to conceal themselves from Jesus. In His presence, they panicked, falling **down before Him** & blurting out His identity (Mk 1:24; Jn 2:19): **You are the Son of God!** They fearfully recognized Him for who He truly was, the **Son of God** (Mk 6:6-7). The tragic irony here is that the demons know who Jesus truly is while the multitudes thought of Him only as a miracle-worker whom they could use for their selfish ends.⁴ These demons are speaking truth. But, as before, Jesus exercises His authority over them & forbids them to say who He was (12). Not because they're saying things that were wrong, but because Jesus didn't need nor want demons to testify of Him. He will be the One that will make this message known in His time, in His way, & it won't be through demons. Eventually, Jesus' disciples would come to understand this truth that Jesus is the Son of God (8:29) but the nation as a whole never did. Under the influence of their corrupt religious leaders, the people rejected Jesus, refusing to confess Him as their divine Messiah & King.⁵

This is the hectic scene as this massive crowd is closing in on Jesus, & He's trying to deal with them. This hasn't really been a successful withdrawal at this point. This is a pretty intense crowd. As you know, crowds can be dangerous & deadly. In 1953, thousands of Russians died when a

⁴ William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, p 130

⁵ John MacArthur, *Mark 1-8*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary, pp 164-165

massive crowd pressed in to see the dead body of Stalin, 2 horses also died in the press. In 1971, people were killed when the fans of a soccer match in Scotland got out of control. They'd left the stadium, but their team scored in the last seconds and they pressed so hard to get back inside, 66 people died. In 1990, 1,426 people died in Mecca, Saudi Arabia while walking through a tunnel in hot weather during the annual Muslim pilgrimage, after one person fainted and blocked the tunnel. Crowds can be deadly. Jesus intends to withdraw with His disciples but wasn't very successful. There's a crushing of this crowd as people are surrounding Him. But in vs 13 we learn He was able to get away. Jesus withdraws up to a mountain & Lk tells us He spends the night in prayer (Lk 6:12). Think of that. Jesus needed to pray. What an extraordinary thing that the eternal Son of God who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, who was very God of very God, & yet in His incarnate condition as a Man, before an event of great significance & importance, spends the night in prayer. In one sense, there was nothing in Jesus' 3 years of ministry before the cross more important than this. These were the men who'd carry on what He started. Without them the work of Jesus would never extend throughout the world. Therefore, He prayed & made the choice with God's wisdom. If Jesus needed to pray, how much more do we need to follow His example.⁶ It's at this point that His ministry strategy changes. Up to this point, these 12 men had followed Jesus as part of His larger group of disciples (2:7). It was time for them to be pulled closer to Jesus from the larger group. Over the preceding months, Jesus focused much of His time on the crowds. Moving forward, He'd increasingly concentrate His attention on the training of these 12 men.⁷ **13-**

15

2. The Crew He'd been crowded in His initial attempt to withdraw, but now, He successfully goes **up on the mountain & summoned those whom He Himself wanted, & they came to Him (13)**. There was an intent here to draw & bring to Himself those who were serious about following Him. There's a difference between the crowd of enthusiasts, those that were there to be entertained & excited to see what Jesus might do, versus those who were actually intent on following Him. As He makes

⁶ Hughes, p 85

⁷ MacArthur, p 167

this withdrawal up the mountain, He gets **those whom He Himself wanted**. We've already seen Him call certain disciples. Mark has shown us the calling of some of the disciples. In chpt 1, he wrote of the calling of 4 fishermen, Peter & his brother Andrew, & James & his brother John (16–20). In chpt 2, he told of the call of Levi, or Matthew (14). Jesus' selection of disciples was a radical departure from the custom of the time. Normally, when someone wanted to study with a rabbi, he'd make application, just as students today apply for admission to colleges. Jesus, however, recruited those He wanted to train. He selects a group of 12 nondescript, ordinary men, none of whom came from the religious establishment. He chooses them not for the purpose of ministering to them but so that they might be set apart to minister for Him. Jesus **summoned those whom He Himself wanted** (13). He called those He wanted & His call was a sovereign one, because everyone He called came. When Jesus calls someone to discipleship, He's calling that person to Himself, to belong to Him, to follow Him, & to learn from Him & of Him.⁸

Why does Jesus choose 12? Why not 7 or 77? Why 12? We learn some significance from Matthew where Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel" (19:28). In the messianic kingdom, these 12 men would be given the responsibility to rule over the 12 tribes of Israel. Just as there were 12 tribes of Israel under the old covenant, there would be 12 apostles in the new covenant. The cross was looming nearer. As Jesus set His face toward Calvary, He made preparations for what would happen after His death. Who would carry on the message of the gospel to the world after He'd been killed? The answer to that question started with these 12 men. His choice of these men had a purpose behind it. We find it in vs 14-15. **He appointed 12, so that they would be with Him & that He *could* send them out to preach, & to have authority to cast out the demons.** This was the two-fold purpose of discipleship. **A. To Be With Him** Jesus wanted them, & us, to be with Him, to spend time with Him. On the night of His betrayal, in the upper room, Jesus said:

Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and

⁸ Sproul, p 61

prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also (Jn 14:1–3).

Jesus wants us to be with Him. Is there any greater blessing than to be in the presence of Christ? These 12 would eat with Him, walk with Him, listen to Him, & learn from Him. They'd observe 1st-hand & be eyewitnesses to everything He did & said. They'd also receive on-the-job training. Jesus would give them opportunities to do ministry. Jesus was inviting them into His life. Jesus would be the mentor & they would learn from Him. **B. To Send Them** This is the root from which we get the word *apostle*. That's who an apostle is: somebody who is sent out to be a representative of the one who sent them. Jesus chose them to be with Him & He's choosing them to be the sent ones, to be His ambassadors, His messengers to go forth & preach the gospel & to have authority over disease & the demonic. Up until this point, Jesus has been doing it. He's been the One preaching the gospel (Mk 1:14), healing people (Mt 10:1), & casting out demons. Now He has 12 men chosen so that they can carry on His ministry. In order to authenticate their position as His representatives, Jesus gave them authority in both the physical realm (over disease) & the spiritual realm (over demons). Like Jesus Himself, their message was confirmed by the supernatural signs that they performed by His power (Jn 3:2; 2 Cor 12:11–12). Speaking of the message of salvation, the author of Hebrews explains: **After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard** (that's the apostles), **God also testifying with them, both by signs & wonders & by various miracles & by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will** (Heb 2:3–4). Like their Master, their words were validated by the supernatural works they performed through the power of the Holy Spirit.⁹ No longer would Jesus do it all by Himself. He brings these men in to multiply the ministry He's doing. Jesus' last words to His disciples were the Great Commission. He told them to **make disciples**. What did Jesus mean by this? He was saying everything He's doing with them, they're to do with others. *Find people to instruct, teach, & guide as I have done with you*. Paul says this very clearly in 1 Cor 11:1, **Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ**. In Phil 3:17 we read, **Brethren, join in following my example, & observe those who walk according to the pattern you have**

⁹ MacArthur, pp 168–169

in us. Find people who are walking according to the example of Christ & imitate them. That's discipleship. 2 Tim 2 gives us this kind of a multi-generational, links on a chain, in how it works when Paul tells Timothy, **You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also** (1-2). There's 4 generations involved. You have Paul instructing Timothy. What is Timothy to do? Give it to others with the goal that they'll give it to others as well. This is the chain of discipleship. This is the expectation of the NT. It's simply intentionally spending time with others to grow together closer to Christ. Are you invested in Jesus' plan? Is this your strategy? Are you investing in people? Are you seeking to help others in their effort to follow Christ? Are you learning from others as they follow Christ? That's what we all need to be doing. If you think you don't need this, you're putting yourself outside of Jesus' plan. You don't stop learning in the Christian life. The apostles continued to learn & instruct others after Jesus had left. That's what we need to do as well, individually & as a church.

Who does Jesus choose? **16-19**

In each list in Scripture of these men, their names are organized into the same 3 subgroups of 4 men. The 1st group was comprised of 2 sets of brothers: Peter & Andrew, James & John. The 2nd included Philip, Nathaniel, Matthew, & Thomas. The 3rd consisted of James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot, & Judas Iscariot (who was replaced by Matthias in Acts 1:26). Though the order of the names changes slightly from list to list, they always remain in the same subgroup & the name that starts each group is always the same. Peter always heads group 1, Philip group 2, & James the son of Alphaeus group 3. This suggests that each of these subgroups had its own leader. Though a great deal is known about the men in the 1st group, there's increasingly less information about those who made up the 2nd & 3rd groups. But we do know there's a diverse makeup of this motley crew.

In each list of the 12 apostles, **Simon** Peter is always named 1st, indicating he was the spokesman for the others. An impulsive man of action, Peter often spoke before thinking (Mt 16:22-23; 26:33-35). Yet, Jesus would transform Peter into the solid, steadfast leader of the apostles. That's why

Jesus gave him the name Peter, which means *rock* (Mt 16:18; Jn 1:42). When Jesus 1st met Peter, he was anything but a rock, but he'd become the dominant preacher among the apostles (Acts 2:15–36; 3:12–26; 5:29–32) & a pillar of the early church (Gal 2:9). It's likely his preaching served as the basis for Mark's gospel. According to tradition, Peter was executed as a martyr in Rome, being crucified upside down by his request because he felt unworthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord. Like Peter, **James, the son of Zebedee, & John the brother of James** would have their lives completely transformed by Jesus. The Lord also **gave** them a nickname, **the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder."** In Peter's case, his nickname indicated what Jesus wanted him to become. In the case of James & John, their nickname described a hotheaded & judgmental attitude toward others that they needed to correct (Lk 9:54). Along with Peter, James & John were both present at the transfiguration of Jesus (Mk 9:2). When Jesus raised Jarius' daughter from the dead, these 3 were there. When Jesus is praying the night before He's arrested & He goes further into the garden, He takes these 3 with Him. James was martyred early in church history, being beheaded by Herod Agrippa I in the mid-40s AD (Acts 12:2). John, by contrast, was the longest surviving member of the 12. He lived until approximately 100 AD, writing 5 books of the NT & being exiled near the end of his life. That a major theme of his epistles is love (1 Jn 3:14–20; 4:7–21; 5:1; 2 Jn 6) underscores the radical change brought in the life of a former **Son of Thunder**. **Andrew** was the final member of this 1st group. The brother of Peter, Andrew had been a disciple of John the Baptist who began following Jesus early in His public ministry (Jn 1:40). The few times he's highlighted in the gospels, he's seen bringing people to Jesus: his brother, Peter (Jn 1:41–42), a boy with 5 loaves & 2 fish (Jn 6:8–10), & a group of Greeks who wanted to see the Lord (Jn 12:20–22). According to tradition, Andrew died shortly after introducing the wife of a regional governor to the gospel of Jesus Christ. When she refused to recant her faith, her husband had Andrew crucified on an X-shaped cross. He reportedly hung there for 2 days, preaching the gospel to anyone passing by until he died. **Philip** was the leader of the 2nd group. According to Jn 1:44, he was from Bethsaida, the same hometown as Peter & Andrew. Before the feeding of the 5,000, Philip openly wondered where they could buy bread for so many people (Jn 6:5). In the upper room,

it was Philip who said to Jesus, **Lord, show us the Father, & it is enough for us.** In response, **Jesus** said to him, **'Have I been so long with you, & yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, "Show us the Father"?' (Jn 14:8–10).** Philip's thick-headedness on both of those occasions was typical of all the disciples, who only came to fully understand the truth about Jesus after His resurrection. **Bartholomew** began to follow Jesus through the influence of Philip (Jn 1:45). **Bartholomew** means *Son of Tolmai*. He was also called Nathaniel, which means *Given of God*. It was to Nathaniel that Jesus said, **Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!** (Jn 1:47). **Matthew**, the former tax collector, was introduced earlier by Mk (2:14–15). Like all who collected taxes for Rome, he was a despised man who was elevated by the Savior to have the privilege of writing the gospel of Matthew. **Thomas** rounds out the 2nd group. According to Jn 11:16, his nickname was Didymus, which, in Greek, means *twin*. It's in that same vs that Thomas courageously, although pessimistically, told the other disciples, **Let us also go** (with Jesus to Jerusalem), **so that we may die with Him.** That attitude surfaced again, after the resurrection, when Thomas refused to believe the others that Jesus was alive (John 20:24–29). But when he witnessed the risen Christ, Thomas's response was definitive: **My Lord & my God!** (28). Tradition says Thomas took the gospel to India, where he was eventually martyred. **James the son of Alphaeus** leads the 3rd group. Not much is known about either James or his father, Alphaeus. According to Mk 15:40, he was also called James the Less. He had a mother named Mary who also followed Jesus (16:1; Lk 24:10). **Thaddaeus** was also called **Judas the son of James** (Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13) or Judas **not Iscariot** (Jn 14:22). Very little is known about Thaddaeus. Then we have **Simon the Zealot**. What was a Zealot? A Jewish nationalist that hated Rome more than your average Jew. Some of these Jewish nationalists would actually go so far as murdering Roman soldiers. They were terrorists. This group of 12 included a zealot who hates Rome with a passion & a Jew working for Rome. Think they ever had heated discussions? **Judas Iscariot** is always mentioned last in the lists of the apostles because he **betrayed Jesus**. The defection of Judas may have been a surprise to everyone else, but Jesus wasn't deceived by his treachery. As the Lord told His disciples in Jn 6:70,

Did I Myself not choose you, the 12, & yet one of you is a devil? Jesus knew all along that Judas would betray Him. In fact, that defection was part of God's plan (Acts 1:15–26).

Jesus calls these men together & they're your average, ordinary Jewish men. Jesus could've picked educated, powerful religious leaders like Nicodemus. But He doesn't. He picks these average guys & chooses to invest in them. These are the people He'll pour His life into. Why pick these ordinary men? Because that's how God works. Think about all of us here. We're average & ordinary. That's who God uses. Paul says in 1 Cor 1:26-29,

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, & God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, & the base things of the world & the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God.

Jesus picks average people. Why? Because that's going to bring total & full glory to God. There's no other explanation for the way that these men are transformed into a completely new people. They're passionate in their preaching of Christ & living it out. They're bold & no one can stop them. They don't even care about being imprisoned, persecuted, & killed. Think about all that Jesus would teach these guys in His interactions with them. He would teach Peter to persevere despite his failure after denying Christ 3x. He'd teach John to love & care for Mary His mother. He'd teach James to be bold as one of the 1st martyrs in the church. He'd teach Thomas the true definition of faith: believing without seeing. He'd teach all of them to love to the end by washing their feet the night before He was arrested & then crucified, including Judas the traitor. What about Judas? Why would Jesus Judas who would be one who'd betray Him? The choice of Judas was just as important as the choice of any of the others. It wasn't because Jesus didn't know how he'd turn out. Jesus told His disciples He chose them and knew one of them was a devil. It wasn't because He had no others to choose. He could raise up followers from stones, so He could easily have found someone else. We read of no scandal surrounding Judas during Jesus' ministry. The other disciples did far more stupid things during their time with Jesus. A man once asked a theologian, *Why did Jesus*

*choose Judas Iscariot to be his disciple? The teacher replied, I don't know, but I have an even harder question: Why did Jesus choose me?*¹⁰

How do you change a group of ordinary men to become this passionate for & faithful to Jesus? It took time. Jesus invited them into His life. He invested hours into each of them. It took patience & grace. He repeats Himself over & over again. He doesn't abandon them. He could give up on them but He doesn't. He continues. He's patient with them. This is His game plan. This is His strategy. Is it easy? Absolutely not. Because we all know that relationships are hard. We don't always see eye-to-eye. We get on each other's nerves. We get tired & cranky. We want to give up, but we need to be convinced of investing in others, knowing this God's game plan. From a human standpoint, these 12 men were odd choices, because they were uneducated, untrained, & uninfluential. Yet, from God's standpoint, they were the perfect choice—weak & imperfect instruments through whom His power would be gloriously displayed (1 Cor 1:26–31). Before their lives were over, they were used to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). That Jesus could use such ordinary people to do such extraordinary things underscores the supernatural purpose of His sovereign power. As Mark's sweeping summary has shown, that power was demonstrated in the miracles Jesus performed. It was also evidenced in the men whom He chose. He took a dozen ordinary men & transformed them into the powerful foundation stones of His church (Eph 2:20; Rev 21:14)¹¹ & He wants to change & use us as well. Will we let Him? Will we be His disciples today?

Communion

While they were eating, He took *some* bread, and after a blessing He broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, and said, "Take *it*; this is My body" (Mk 14:22).

When He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. "Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mk 14:23-25).

After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives (Mk 14:26).

¹⁰ David Guzik, www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/mark/mark-3.cfm

¹¹ MacArthur, p 172