

JESUS CHOOSES THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Luke 6:12-26

Key Verse: 6:13

"When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles..."

As God had promised, the Savior of the world came to save sinners from their sins. The Savior is Jesus Christ. At the initial stage of his earthly messianic ministry, he healed the sick and preached the kingdom of God to the poor. But when we prayerfully study the four gospels, we see that Jesus paid his full attention to his twelve disciples, especially to his top disciple, Simon Peter. Today we want to study why Jesus tried to raise his disciples so prayerfully. We also want to learn what kind of persons he chose to be his disciples and what his ultimate purpose in choosing them was. This passage includes part of the Sermon on the Mount, which teaches the inner attitude as his disciples.

First, after all-night prayer Jesus chose the twelve disciples (12-13).

Look at verse 12. "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God." It may be that there was a burden in Jesus' heart to fulfill God's will for world salvation. God sent Jesus to this world to save men from their sins and bring them back to his kingdom. Jesus worked very hard and he was tired. Jesus needed to go somewhere to unburden his burden. It was the time of his prayer to God. "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray" (12a). Through prayer, Jesus could listen to God and rest in God. Jesus began his earthly messianic ministry with prayer and finished with prayer. Jesus prayed all night before choosing the twelve disciples.

Of course, Jesus would destroy the devil's head through his death and resurrection. But the vestige of death in the devil's tail is flailing. Therefore, the disciples should proclaim the gospel until Jesus comes again. This is the reason Jesus prayed all night and chose the twelve disciples--so that his gospel ministry might be continued.

Luke the historian and evangelist does not tell us, as did Mark (Mk 3:14), Jesus' purpose in choosing the twelve, nor how Jesus would train them as his disciples. Ever since the world was made, all the great men have tried to raise up

disciples. There are innumerable examples of this. But Confucius was the great disciple maker. Confucius raised his disciples in order to unify the nation and to establish the moral standard of his people. In the past, the influence of Confucius was indeed great in the Oriental countries. These days, a huge number of Americans are the disciples of Confucius in his theory of "the better way." But we must know that better is the enemy of the best. Confucius was so busy that he did not have time to sit down to write anything. But his disciples edited his sayings and compiled them into seven books. First are The Four Books of Confucius' Analects. Next are The Three Classics. These seven books established the moral standard and political principle of China. These books were all written in Chinese characters. But Chinese teachers never taught their students how to read them or how to interpret their meaning. The teachers let their students kneel down before them and memorize the seven books for twelve hours every day. When they did so, they were inspired to understand the unknown characters and when they read the books again and again the readers could grasp the unknown meaning of the sentences. Their principle of discipleship training was to enable the disciples to grasp the secret meaning of books. Confucius' real motive of training his people was, as mentioned before, to unify his people through language and to establish the moral standard of his people. Since then China became the most civilized people of the world.

In the past, in England, if one finished a Ph.D. program, but still did not grasp his field of scholarship, he could not obtain a Ph.D. So students could not get a Ph.D. until they were a little better than their own professors. Their scholastic training was for the sake of world conquest. English discipleship training was hard. Even in the wintertime, Cambridge and Oxford students were not given heat for the sake of perseverance training. Chinese discipleship training was even harder than that of England. Chinese scholars had to memorize such a huge amount-- seven books-- without making even one mistake. At the test, the examiner mainly asked the testee to see if he had grasped the meaning of the book and if he could be creative, utilizing the theory he learned.

Jesus' discipleship training was even harder. England and China based their training on academic aptitude. But Jesus' discipleship training requires transformation. For example, a selfish man should be changed into a very sacrificial person. A very indifferent person should be changed into a man of God's heart. Most importantly, they must grow spiritually until they could see the spiritual world. They must grow until they might have God's heart to save men from their sins. The last part of this verse says, "whom he also designated apostles." Here the word "apostle" means "one who is to be sent." Jesus' discipleship training was to send the apostles as light to the dark world to proclaim the gospel of Jesus.

Second, Jesus chose twelve kinds of persons (14-16).

Verses 14-16 describe the choosing and ordination of the Twelve from among many disciples. We wonder why Jesus did not choose people of good quality or well-educated people. Indeed, Jesus chose his disciples from among people on the bottom of society. They appear to be unemployed people. How nice it would be if bright and educated people had been Jesus' disciples! But when we see these disciples one by one, we see many interesting things in them. Look at verses 14-16. "Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor." They are twelve. Twelve represents the twelve tribes of Israel. The number twelve implies the whole world. There are many kinds of people in the world. But the Twelve represent each kind. Let's think about the disciples.

* *Simon*. Simon was top leadership material. He was introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew. We don't know if Andrew was his older brother or younger brother. When we study the Bible, Peter seems to be a physically older brother. But when we see him with spiritual eyes, he seems to be a younger brother to Andrew because of his spiritual immaturity. He was a fisherman, a man of the sea. He was not afraid of the dark sea of the night. When Jesus called him by saying, "from now on you will catch men," he left everything and followed Jesus (Lk 5:10). He had the power of determination and decision. When he saw God in Jesus he was happy to be his disciple and began to follow him. When Jesus began to predict his death and resurrection, all the other disciples were paralyzed by fear. But Peter was not fearful. He said boldly, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you" (Jn 13:37). But during Jesus' trial, he denied Jesus three times. However, the Risen Jesus came and cooked a delicious breakfast and fed him. Despite his betrayal, Peter was moved so much that he decided to participate in the remaining suffering of Jesus.

* *Andrew*. Andrew knew the heart of Jesus most. As soon as Andrew saw Jesus, he learned that Jesus is the Lamb of God. He heard John the Baptist say in John 1:29b, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" From the beginning, Andrew knew who Jesus was. From the beginning, he knew the heart of Jesus. Once a crowd of 5,000 people invaded the disciples' retreat. Then, filled with compassion, Jesus taught them for a long time. After his teaching, the disciples had to feed them. They were helpless. But Jesus said, "You give them something to eat" (Mk 6:37a).

The other disciples really did not understand what Jesus was talking about. They had no money. They had no bread. There were more than 5,000 people, excluding women and children. But Andrew knew the heart of Jesus. And he went around and found a boy who had five loaves and two fish. Somehow he persuaded him to come to Jesus with his five loaves and two fish. He said, "Lord, here are five loaves and two fish. But how far will they go among so many?" (Jn 6:9). It was not a comedy. It was the evidence that Andrew knew the shepherd heart of Jesus, who wanted to feed 5,000 hungry people.

* *James and John.* James and John were quiet but politically ambitious. They restrained themselves in every way. But they were very ambitious. They wanted to sit at the right and left of Jesus in his earthly messianic kingdom. For this, they nagged their mother to visit Jesus (Mt 20:20).

* *Philip and Bartholomew.* Philip was a calculative person. He wanted to do many things. When he calculated this and that, nothing was possible and everything was impossible. Bartholomew was a faithful member of the dinner table.

* *Matthew.* Matthew was Levi, the tax collector. He was a quisling and a man of crooked conscience. However, we cannot deny that he wrote the Sermon on the Mount after meeting Jesus.

* *Thomas.* Thomas was a man of doubt. Everybody was beginning to believe the resurrection of Jesus. But he refused to believe even if he saw Jesus face to face. He said, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (Jn 20:25).

* *James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas son of James.* These three disciples were not so distinctive. We know that the Zealot was a member of a revolutionary group.

* *Judas Iscariot.* Judas Iscariot was the treasurer of Jesus' company. He was most trusted and loved. When we read about the last supper, we see that Jesus wanted to give him a chance to repent of his decision to betray Jesus. But he refused Jesus' love. He was a man who rejected Jesus' love to the end. He committed suicide. His suicide was a tragic one (Mt 27:5).

When we read about these people, we realize that Jesus chose the twelve disciples in the hope of saving all people of the world. Jesus chose each different person because Peter, a man of hot temper, cannot be a good shepherd to Bartholomew. Jesus wanted to save all the Peter kind of people through Peter. Jesus wanted to save all the Bartholomew kind of people through Bartholomew. Jesus wanted to save all the Matthew kind of people through Matthew. Jesus was a man of vision. Most of all, he wanted to save all kinds of people through twelve representative kinds of persons.

Third, the disciples' basic inner attitude (17-21).

When we sketch the scene of the ordination of the twelve disciples, we see that Jesus was standing on higher ground. And the twelve were standing on the middle ground. And many other ordinary disciples were standing on the lower ground. Here Jesus tells us that whatever we do, we must have a basic inner attitude. Look at verse 20. "Looking at his disciples, he said: 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.'" Here the word "poor" has spiritual meaning. Matthew said, "poor in spirit" (Mt 5:3). The qualification of Jesus' disciple is to be poor in spirit. In other words, they are those whose hearts are humble enough to learn the heart of Jesus or God's will for world salvation. Fallen men are very proud. They never learn. Therefore whoever wants to be Jesus' disciple must deny his proud mind and take up God's will for himself. Look at verse 21. "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh." Truly happy men are those who suffer much in order to learn of Jesus. Those who truly want to learn of Jesus are supposed to undergo much hunger. Those who truly want to learn of Jesus are supposed to undergo much weeping. Those who have never experienced much hunger and weeping are fake disciples of Jesus. Those who want to be Jesus' disciples must have a basic attitude to suffer much. Worldly discipleship is rewarded with temporal future security. But Jesus' disciples are rewarded with the kingdom of God.

Fourth, the disciples' attitude toward the world (21b-23).

Look at verses 21b and 22. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man." When we live according to Bible teachings, people who live in the darkness unconditionally hate us and try to exclude and insult us and call us evil. Many young Christians thought that they would be happy when they believe in Jesus. Instead of happiness, usually persecution follows. We hope that there will be no persecutions. But when we try to live as the

disciples of Jesus, we cannot escape from many persecutions. It is not a strange phenomenon. We are following the footsteps of Jesus. We are following the footsteps of our forefathers. Look at verse 23. "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets."

Fifth, those who deserve woes (24-26).

These days there are many Christians. But they are so proud that they can learn nothing from Jesus. These fake Christians seem to live for worldly pleasures. So, many fake Christians are very popular among ordinary Christians. They never receive any persecutions, only popularity. They appear to be great. But according to the truth of Bible teaching, they are in the category of woes. Let's read verses 24-26. "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets." Fake Christians seem to be easy and glorious. But they are not. Woes to them will be great at the day of our Lord's judgment. Let's not be cultural Christians.

We learn that Jesus chose the twelve disciples who were representative of twelve kinds of people. It was to save the whole world through them. We must see others' weaknesses as virtues and raise them as the servants of God. A servant of God needs a basic inner attitude toward himself and the world.