

Outcasts Part 3

The 12 Disciples

Matthew 10:1-26, Luke 10:1-12

Memory Verses: Mark 1:17-18

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

To the world an outcast is anyone who doesn't seem to fit. They don't fit into the cool group, or the normal group, whatever that means. They may have disabilities, done something wrong, or simply beat to their own drum. The world is filled with outcasts; people who have been discarded, thrown away, rejected, and forgotten by society. But there is one place where all outcasts can find a home; a place to belong. Regardless of our past or our differences, everyone finds love and acceptance at the foot of the cross of Jesus Christ.

Over the last two weeks we've been talking about one of these outcasts. His name was John. Some called him John the Baptist. Some called him Crazy John. But Jesus called him friend. Though he wore clothes made of camels hair, ate locusts and wild honey, and lived in the wilderness, Jesus said that no man born of woman was greater than John. John found acceptance in Jesus Christ and because of that he did some pretty incredible things for the kingdom.

Today we will meet some more of Jesus' outcast friends. 12 to be exact. And like John, the 12 disciples were not the best and the brightest. Far from it in fact. They were dirty fishermen, traitorous tax collectors, blood thirsty zealots, and nomadic ragamuffins. But they all had one thing in common, they were not satisfied by the world in which they lived; they were searching for something greater, and they found it in Jesus. Look at [Luke 6:12-16](#). 12 misfits, one of whom would betray him; this is who he chose to follow him. Again we see this in [Mark 3:13-19](#).

It seems odd that Jesus would choose these men to be his disciples. Why them? Why the worst of the worst? How could these be the men who would end up changing the world?

Maybe you feel that way at times. You are a Christian, but you don't understand your place in all of this. You aren't worthy, you aren't strong enough; you aren't smart enough, and you definitely aren't pretty enough. And yet, you sit here today as one of his chosen disciples. Why would he choose any of us? Why would he choose them?

Today we will see who these men were, what they were called to do, and why they were chosen to follow Christ. And, I have a feeling that as we look at them we will also learn a little bit about who we are, what we've been called to do, and why we were chosen as well. But before we start I'm going to give you gist. The main point today is simple; **Jesus**

has chosen us, thoroughly ordinary people, that through us He may show himself without doubt, an extraordinary God.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first thing we need to see this morning is that... **The Identity of the Disciples Parallels Our Identity as The Church.** Who were the disciples? I like to split the disciples into two groups. The first group we will look at are who I call the fishermen. There are seven in this group. Andrew, Peter, James, John, Thomas, Philip, and Nathaniel. Being a fishermen in the first century was common. People needed to eat and fish was the main means of protein. As best as history can tell us, these men were the lowest rung of the blue collar ladder. They were poor, smelly, dirty, and tired. No doubt they would spend their R&R drinking, gambling, and whoring; anything to take the edge off, as they say. They were far from the best and righteous. So of course this is where Jesus started.

The first person that Jesus called to be a disciple of his was Andrew. Andrews was previously a disciple of John the Baptist and so it was a logical transition for him. He'd already followed one crazy religious guy, why not another. Look with me in [John 1:35-42](#). Notice what kind of a man Andrew is. Look at what he does. He immediately goes and finds his brother Simon Peter, tells him he has found the messiah and then takes him to Jesus. **A true disciple of Jesus always draws others to Him.**

The second disciple is Simon Peter, and unlike Andrew, Peter was much rougher around the edges. We see his story begin in...[Mark 1:16-18](#), and [Luke 5:1-8](#). Peter appears to be a skeptic at first, but then see's the power of Christ and immediately surrenders his life to him. In accepting Christ, notice that the first thing that Peter does is repent of his sin. When we truly recognize the holiness of Jesus we also recognize how far from him we truly are. Peter is considered the main disciple because He is the one we know the most about. He is the only disciple that we know was married because we know in [Mt 8:14](#) Jesus heals his mother in law. We know that Jesus is the one who gave him the nick name Peter, which means rock. We know that he walked on the water with Jesus in [Mt 14:29](#). We know that on a number of occasions Jesus has to rebuke Peter for his hasty comments or actions. We hear Jesus tell him, "Satan, get behind me," and "Peter, put away your sword." One of the most known tidbits about Peter is that he denied Jesus three times. Peter was a walking contradiction. But that didn't stop Jesus from appointing him the leader of the disciples and ultimately of the early church. The significance of Peter in Jesus' ministry and in the early church cannot be overstated.

Next you have another set of brothers; James and John. Let's read about them in [Luke 5:9-11](#), and [Mark 1:19-20](#). James & John, along with Peter are considered the big 3; the inner circle if you will. Where the other disciples went most places with Christ, these three went everywhere with

Him. They were there with him at the transfiguration. They were there with him in the garden. And they were the three that Jesus set apart as the pillars of the church. From just these three men come 6 of the New Testament Epistles. We see that in **Mark 3:17** Jesus nick named James and John the Sons of Thunder. They like Peter, the Rock, must have had strong, thunderous, personalities. For instance in **Mark 10:35-37** these two brothers, to the dissatisfaction of the others, tried to convince Jesus to let them sit next to him in the kingdom of heaven. Also, in **Luke 9:54**, they foolishly asked Jesus if they could call down the fire of heaven to roast some hecklers. But this did not stop John from later referring to himself in his Gospel as “the one Jesus loved.” Jesus did indeed love these brothers.

Next you a set of best friends; Philip & Nathanael. Read with me in **John 1:43-51**. Just like Andrew, Philip declares Jesus as the Messiah and then immediately goes and tells someone else. His friend Nathanael, like Peter, is very skeptical. He says, “how could anything good come from Nazareth.” It's funny, but even Jesus was labeled an outcast by the outcasts he chose as his disciples. Jesus' interaction with Nathanael is very interesting. Jesus tells him that he knows that he is a man of integrity. Nathanael shrugs off the compliment, and asks, how could you possibly know who I am? Jesus responds, “I've always known you. Just earlier I saw you under the fig tree.” Nathanael, again like Peter, accepts him as Lord after a miraculous sign.

The reason we put these two along with Thomas in the fishermen category is three fold. Their occupations aren't mentioned. They are from the same town as Andrew, Peter, James & John. And in **John 21:2-8**, following the resurrection, we see them with Andrew, Peter, James & John fishing.

Which brings us to the last one in this group; Thomas. Unfortunately Thomas is known for really one thing as a disciple. He doubted. After the resurrection, he would not believe that Christ was risen unless he could actually put his hand in his scars. Of course, Jesus obliged, but he left us with a great encouragement in **John 20:29**, “blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.”

The second group of disciples are who I call, very cleverly, the non-fishermen. For the most part, the details are much more scant in telling us who these men were. Let's start with Matthew. Look with me in **Luke 5:27-32, Mark 2:13-14, Matthew 9:9**. Matthew, also called Levi, was a tax collector. Tax collectors were among the most hated and reviled people in Israel. Most of them were Jews who had agreed to collect taxes from among their own people for the Roman government. They were seen as traitors and therefore, even though they were wealthier in standing, were considered lower than fishermen. In the passage we just read, after coming to Christ, Matthew throws a party for

Jesus and invites other tax collectors to join. Matthew wasn't ashamed of Jesus and Jesus wasn't of Matthew and his friends. If anything Matthew lowered Jesus' standing in the eyes of the pharisees, but He didn't seem to mind..

Next we have James the Lesser also known as James the son of Alphaeus. The traditional name; James the Lesser is most likely given because of the fact that he is the disciple we know the least about. He didn't write a Gospel or an Epistle, nor do we know of any of his stories or accomplishments.

Next in the list is Thaddaeus. Thaddaeus was also known as Judas or Jude. Jude is considered by most theologians to be one of the four physical brothers of Jesus mentioned in **Mark 6:3**. This is interesting for a couple of reasons. It is highly possible that Jude, like Jesus, followed Joseph into the family business, which was carpentry. It's also interesting because he is the literal brother of the Messiah. Talk about feeling like an outcast. There's no way you can step out of that shadow. Jude is credited with writing the Epistle of Jude.

Next we have Simon the Zealot. Again, the only thing we know about Simon is that he was a Zealot. The Zealots were a first-century political movement who sought to overthrow the occupying Roman government through diplomacy and terrorism. If diplomacy failed they had no problem resorting to guerrilla warfare. It was ultimately the Zealots who overthrew the Romans in AD66 but were defeated when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in AD70. Yes, Jesus chose a terrorist as one of his disciples.

And lastly, there was Judas Iscariot. Judas was a thief before he knew Christ and a thief after. While most of the disciples began a journey of transformation after deciding to follow Christ, Judas never changed. Why, because he was a fake pretender. He is famous because eventually he chose to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver, after which he hung himself in disgrace. So get this... Jesus chose for one of his 12 disciples, the very man he knew would steal from the group's money bag and ultimately betray him with a kiss.

So what does the make up of the disciples tell us about who we are as the church? Four things. First, it tells us that Jesus loves everyone unconditionally. **It doesn't matter what you've done wrong or where you've failed, you are never too broken for Christ.** Secondly, it tells us that Jesus chooses people from every walk of life; people from every socioeconomic class, racial background, and past circumstances. He chose those in his own family and those who would betray him to death. He chose those who were liked and those who were hated. Those with quiet dispositions and those with strong personalities. You are never too much of an outcast for Christ. Third, it shows us that Jesus allows pretenders into his church for a time. Just because you are a member of a church or a Covenant Partner

here doesn't mean that you are a true follower. It simply means that Jesus has allowed you into fold for a time, until which he chooses to separate the goats from the sheep. And, lastly, it tells us that Jesus doesn't choose us for what we can bring to the table, but for what he can do through us. If he can use unlearned, untrained, unrighteous people to spread the Gospel then the world will see that our message is not some manufactured man-made propaganda but the word of God. **Jesus has chosen us, thoroughly ordinary people, that through us He may show himself without doubt, an extraordinary God.**

The other thing we need to see this morning is that... **The Mission of the Disciples Prepares Us For the Great Commission.** Look with me in **Matthew 10:1-26, 40-42, Mark 6:7-13, Luke 9:1-6.** Let's sum that up. They were given power by Jesus; power to cast out demons, heal diseases, raise the dead, and speak with authority to high ranking officials. They were given a specific mission. They were told to go to all the towns and villages of Israel, to proclaim the kingdom and call people to repentance and to receive Christ. They were told to travel with little money and clothes as to rely on God to supply their needs. They were told to preach to those who were willing to hear and to peacefully depart from those who rejected the Gospel and move on to the next town. They were expected to be wise and pure, have no fear, and serve others in the name of Christ. Lastly, they were warned by Jesus that they would be arrested and beaten. That they would be betrayed by family and friends and that they would be hated on account of Christ. It would be hard but in the end they would receive eternal reward.

Later Jesus appointed 72 others who had watched and learned from the 12. Look what he instructs them to do in **Luke 10:1-12.** It's the exact same thing. So what does this tell us? It tells us that the mission of preaching the Gospel from village to village didn't stop with the 12 disciples. This wasn't a special mission for a select few. This was a mission for everyone who calls themselves a follower of Christ. It tells us that this mission continues today with us. We are called just as they were, to go and make disciples, serve in the name of Jesus, and preach repentance and faith in Christ. **We share a similar calling to the original 12 disciples. Go and preach the Gospel of Christ to all that will listen.**

And just as they were sent out with power, so we too have the power of the Holy Spirit within us. We are assured of success because we never go alone. **Luke 10:17-24** shows us what will happen if we are faithful to follow in the disciple's footsteps. And we also may share a similar fate. Eventually every single one of the disciples, the apostles, and those who joined them like Paul, James, Steven, and Philip were martyred. They were all arrested, beaten, and crucified. Only John was spared. And even then he was exiled on an island until he died. The call

to follow Christ is a worthy calling of which none of us are worthy of. It has great joy and peace as we find comfort in our unity. A bunch of outcasts in one accord worshipping one God. But it also comes at a great price. The world will hate us. The world will try to destroy us. The world may even take our lives. But it is all worth it because on the other side is eternal reward.

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Application

So why were these outcasts chosen by Christ as his disciples? Why are we? **1 Corinthians 1:27** gives us the answer. "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. It is no insult that we are foolish and weak, we are. But we can be used by our savior to show the world that He is who he said he was, and that he can do what he said he can do, namely save the world from their sin. **Jesus has chosen us, thoroughly ordinary people, that through us He may show himself without doubt, an extraordinary God.**

Conclusion

Today Jesus is calling you as one of his disciples. Today Jesus is calling you to follow him the rest of your life. Today he is sending you to the towns and villages of the world to preach the Gospel. Will you like Andrew, Peter, James, and John throw down your nets and become fishers of men. Will you like Matthew leave your booth and your wealth to pursue Him? Will you like Simon leave your life of hatred and war and find peace in Him? Or will you like Judas continue to pretend to be a follower, only to betray him when stuff gets real? **We are all outcasts. The only difference is whether we will be outcasts because of Jesus, or in spite of him? Jesus has chosen us, thoroughly ordinary people, that through us He may show himself without doubt, an extraordinary God.**