

“And He Appointed Twelve”

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Read Mark 3:13-19

I find this statement intriguing. Why twelve, and why these twelve and not some other group or number? Although the purpose of God is knowable, it is not exhaustible. The intricacies of God's purpose will forever be shrouded behind the veil of infinity. Even though we cannot exhaust the subject as to why God appointed these twelve to be with Him, it still permits us to note several salient features.

First, what is of interest is that Jesus chose individuals to be a part of a larger community, a fellowship if you will. Christianity is not lived in isolation. The idea of being a hermit for Jesus is untenable.

“The Christian is something which from the beginning had to be discovered and lived out in a fellowship. The whole essence of Christianity was that it bound men to their fellows, and presented them with the task of living with each other and for each other.” (William Barclay, Mark, 73, 74).

This is why John 13:34, 35 says that the overriding characteristic of the Christian community is our love for one another. This is why John in his letter, 1 John, says that if you do not love your brother you do not love God. This is why I believe every believer needs to identify themselves with a specific flock through membership and under the oversight of shepherds. The community might be flawed, but the greater issue is isolation versus identification. With who have you identified yourself? What believing community are you a part of? These are the kinds of questions we should be asking in light of what Jesus did.

Second, this community is made up of a “mixed bag of worms.” 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?” <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/4103.htm>

Notice who God selects and what this group would look like. Matthew is a social outcast and someone who has sold his proverbial soul to the devil. Simon the zealot was patriotic to a fault and hated the likes of Matthew. Yet God puts two unlikely people together in a group that would now have to love one another and get along for the sake of the mission. “Christianity began by insisting that the most diverse people should live together and by enabling them to do so, because they were all living with Jesus.” (William Barclay, Mark, 74).

Third, the community assumes a new identity. “The renaming of persons implies a reversal of identity.” (Bede, “Homilies on the Gospels,” 1:21 in Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament II - Mark, 40).

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It is safe for us to assume that Jesus through the renaming of His group was laying claim to the group. He owned them. This is what naming implies and communicates to the immediate audience. Their identity was no longer their vocation but their community. They will be called Christians, followers of Christ. Modern American culture loathes the idea of solidarity, of losing one's own agenda for the sake of the greater good. Our individualism will be to our national destruction. We are forgetting the statement, "One nation under God, indivisible . . ."

The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag is an oath of loyalty to the country. It is recited at many public events. Congress sessions open with the recitation of the Pledge. The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag reads as follows:

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

What is true of our nation is equally true of our identity as a Christian and as a local church. If we forget who we are and why we are here, then to that same degree we will fail to enjoy all that He is, what He has done, and who we are in Him.

Let us never forget that He chose us, and that His choice of us has a very distinct purpose behind it. May we in time and in eternity celebrate the goodness and grace of God in our inclusion in His family and mission.