

The Twelve

Mark 3: 13-19

January 22nd, 2012

We are continuing our study of the life of Christ from the book of Mark in the 3rd chapter, verses 13-19.

Quite often Celisa and I will meet a young couple, and as they approach us, they have a big grin on their face, and we know they are going to tell us something really, really good. Now, in telling us the good news, they normally reach into the purse, or pocket, and they pull out a picture of possibly their 1st child. Now the picture is not one that was taken in a studio, but one that was taken in a doctor's office. It is a picture that shows life in the womb. It is the picture of a baby in what we call the embryo or fetus stage, still protected and safe in the belly of its mother. Because the family has a picture, the baby usually is already named. In that little picture you can see a little, head, nose, ears, or arms, legs and feet. It is absolutely amazing! Of course I have a line saying how beautiful the baby already is because everyone thinks their babies are beautiful. What is amazing is that sometimes later, I will actually get to see that baby in person and present it to this body, and you see the face, arms, and legs, and yes they are beautiful. This morning we have a rare privilege, and that is to look into the very womb of the gospels, and begin to see the formation of what would later be called the Church. We have a rare glimpse. If it were not for the gospels, if it were not for the life of Christ, and the recording of that, we would have just seen the Church after its birth. But what we get to see this morning is the beginning of the New Testament people of God. As we read the Scriptures, please pay careful attention as this passage is powerful. What you will see in this picture of

the womb this morning is exactly what you will see “lived” out in the early Church. I pray that we still see this in the body of Christ here at HBC.

Scripture

“And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

As we study the life of Christ, this is significant. The story before this one where we ended last week, (now remember this is not a verse by verse study) Jesus’ fame is spread so far now that all Israel is coming to Him. There is such a crowd of people around Him that Mark says Jesus is concerned that He might be crushed. Have you ever thought about the pressure of being the Son of God? You think we have pressure as a dad, a business man, a mom, or a student...Jesus has so many people crowding around Him now that He is fearful of being crushed, and He is the Son of God! So He asked His disciples to prepare a boat so that they have an exit strategy just in case. People are pressuring Him to meet their needs. The only people in the crowd who really recognizes who He is are the demons, and He commands the demons to be muzzled like a dog. Now we see Him on a mountain. We are going to see Jesus on a mountain many times in the gospel of Mark. Yes He was physically on a mountain, but there is a deeper meaning than just the physicalness of Jesus being on a mountain. You see Jesus is the Son of God. We already know that even though the audience at this time does not. What we understand is that in the Old Testament when God dealt with His people, many times He would use a mountain as the point of revelation. It was from a mountain that He would reveal Himself to His people. We have to remember, if we go back to

Exodus 19, it was actually on a mountain that God called Moses and constituted the people that came out of Egypt as His people. So this is significant. So that phrase "like father, like son", the son in this passage is getting ready to constitute the New Testament people of God in embryo form. And He goes to a mountain just like His Father did. And on that mountain He is going to reveal Himself to a group of people who, according to the gospel of Mark, are already disciples. But from that group, on that mountain, the Bible says that "He called to Him those He willed".

This morning, as we think about Jesus calling the twelve, I want to give you 3 thoughts. We are going to see the call, the response, and the making; the calling, the responding, and the making of the twelve. Have you ever wondered why twelve? There is no evidence anywhere else in the biblical world of this day of the number 12 being special in forming a new school, or a new people. As a matter of fact, you know that 12 is not really significant because when they got ready to ordain deacons in the early Church (Acts 6) they did not choose 12, they chose 7. Why 12 disciples? Why 12 Apostles? I think you know. How many patriarchs in the Old Testament? There were 12. From each patriarch came a tribe and those 12 tribes of Jacob became known as the people of God. I labor this point, please do not miss it. For the establishing of the Church, you do not look to Acts chapter 1 and 2, you look to the gospels. Jesus clearly taught in Matthew chapter 16, while He was in Caesarea Philippi at the midpoint of His ministry, that He Himself would build His own Church. What we see at the beginning of His ministry, without the disciples knowing it, is the Church in the womb of God, so to speak. That is the significance of the 12. As a matter of fact, when we studied the book of Revelation, we saw the 144,000, that is $12 \times 12 \times 1000$. That 144,000 stands for the true people of God in their entirety. 12 from the Old Testament, and 12 from the New Testament multiplied together $\times 1000$ is 144,000. This is symbolic of the entire people of God. What you are seeing here is the forming of the Church of which we will later become a part, and I want you to see how it starts. It starts with a call, "And He called to Him those He desired". The

Greek is a little more emphatic, it says literally, "He summoned to Him those whom He wanted". You see, the Church is because of the choice of Jesus Christ. He summoned those whom He willed, who He wanted. I think sometimes we forget that it is not us who initiated us being here, but it is God who initiated us being here. You and I, just like Peter, James, John, Andrew, and so forth, are here today, not because of our choice, but because of His choice. You have to understand that this was radical. You see, this theme is going to be important in Mark's gospel. Mark has already told us about the disciples of Jesus and their behavior being questioned. So Mark stops, and he backs up, and he gives us a view of these people who are being questioned as disciples of Jesus. So the entire picture here of the early Church is a picture of what true discipleship is all about. True discipleship does not start because someone desires Jesus, but because Jesus desires someone. This was revolutionary in this day. I get so tickled at churches that just cannot get over doing it the way they have always done it. It is like it has been handed down to us in stone to do it that way. Yet when our Jesus broke onto the scene, He did not do it the way it was being done! It was revolutionary, and it was radical. To be a disciple meant to be a student, to be a learner. In the biblical world, students learned by choosing a rabbi. Rabbis, in the biblical world, never called people to themselves. They called people to the Torah, the Law. So if you were a rabbi, you taught the Law, and when someone came to your school of thought, you did not make them a follower of you, you made them a follower of the Law. Now there were several schools of law in the biblical world. There were conservative schools and liberal schools, but a rabbi never chose a student, the student chose the rabbi, and that is significant. This is telling us is that the disciples did not choose Jesus to study the Law under Him, He is doing something radical. To be the people of God is not to study the Book, even though the people of God do study the Book. It is not to be a follower of the Book. It is not to do things God's way. It is to follow Jesus, a person, and He makes the choice.

Once the choice has been made to call, there must be a response to the call. What is the response? Mark says "they came to Him". Though this does not look significant I think it is, so I want you to note this; the word that Mark uses here means "to come away to Him". Many times when we think about coming to someone, our English minds forget that in order to be where we are, we had to leave where we were. Sometimes in our smoothing out of words in English, we leave out some important truths. The important truth is for a person who responds to the call of Jesus to follow Him and be a true disciple, it involves leaving where you were in order to be where He is. So because of Jesus' call of you, there will be a cost to you. As Kory talked about a few weeks ago, those 1st 4 disciples had to quit doing what they wanted to do, and now do what Jesus wanted them to do. Even though for some it would still involve doing the same thing they had been doing, except doing it for a different reason. If you are part of the Church this morning, let me ask you this question. Have you truly responded to the call of God? If you are a part of the people of God, the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God, at some point in your past, has converged upon you, and you sensed a breaking in of God into your life, to abandon where you were, and to now be where you are. You should have a testimony of that. I will never forget when I was ordained to preach the Word at Ledbetter Baptist Church; do you know what my 1st question was from the church? They wanted a testimony of my salvation. The 2nd one was for a testimony of my call. I was sitting before a church with a lot of old, ordained men questioning me, and as I looked into those men's eyes, here is what I knew they were listening for. They were not listening for me to give a testimony that shared how much I wanted to do for God, what I wanted to do, preach His Word, but what they wanted to hear was, did God want me to do what I was now going to be doing? As much as you, as a church, want me to want to do what I do, you really do not care if I want to do it, all you really want to know is if God wants me to do it. If any of you thought that I wanted to do it but God did not, you would not be in this church, or you would be trying to get rid of Bro Ricky. And yet, we do not ask the membership to have that same response of a true call from

God, and a true response of leaving where I am, or were, to be where I now am, and that is a part of something bigger than me, the body of Christ.

Then it says "He appointed twelve". Now, when I say what I say, in no way do I imply you cannot trust your Bible because you can. But knowing what I know about most of us, we did not enjoy grammar in school. So sometimes we do not know the depth of the English language. If you are not careful, when you see Jesus calling, and people coming to Him, and Him appointing them, it looks like He is calling someone who would be great in a certain position because they are good at a certain thing. That is not what this is saying. It is not Jesus gathering 12 people together and looking at them and deciding what they do best and then appointing them responsibilities in the body. I think the best way for us to translate this is that He "made" the 12. He called 12 individual people, they responded, and then He took them and "made" them into something that they had never been before. It was not based on what they had in and of themselves; it was based on what He wanted for them. The reason I say this is because the definition of this word literally means "to bring about, to cause to be". That is significant because when they translated the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek, they used the same verb in Genesis 1:1 that is used here by Mark. "In the beginning God **appointed** the heavens and the earth"; you would not like that at all! God did not appoint things that already were. "In the beginning, God **made** ('out of nothing, brought into existence, caused to be') the heavens and the earth"; that is what we believe in the Church. And that is the same thing He did with the Church, He **made** the 12, He is the cause of the 12 being who they are going to be. Mark tells us they are going to be called Apostles, they will get that title later, meaning "sent forth".

Now watch this, I think this is so good; this is what should be going on in our church at this very moment, not in embryonic form, but in life. There is a call, there is a response, and then every time God adds another person to us, He remakes us into who He wants us to be. Mark says "so that", this

is a purpose clause. Why is he calling and making the 12 into a group? It is so that they might "be with Him". Now you ladies will get that before we guys get that. Do you ladies hear this? Jesus called 12 men to Himself. He called them out of what they were doing, brought them together, and made them something they were not, so that they might be with Him. Now I am proposing to you that this is the true picture of the Church, and the true picture of discipleship. I have already said that discipleship means to be a student, a learner, but we do not educate the way they did in the biblical world, except in some rare cases. Today we send our kids off to a school and sit under a teacher where they are taught different subjects. After that year is over, they go onto another teacher at another level of the same subjects. At a certain point we begin to add new subjects. By the time their career is over, there are many teachers, and many subjects that have been in and out of their lives. That is not what is going on here. That is not what it meant in the biblical world to be a disciple or student. I think the best English word for a disciple is the word "apprentice". We have certain trades today where you do not have to already have any knowledge or experience. All you have to be willing to do is to commit the next few years of your life to be under a master tradesmen. While there is book learning involved, the main learning is on the job training. At the end of most apprentice levels, there is something called a journeyman. I have always wondered why they call it a journeyman. I discovered that our English phrase journeyman, in our trades, comes from a French word that means "a period of one day". This referenced that when your apprenticeship was over you could go do the job without the person you were trained under. At the end of the day, you could expect to be paid a day's labor. That pay was different from your pay as an apprentice. Jesus is calling the 12, and constituting the Church as the 12, and giving the privilege of being apprentices, and the privilege of being with Him. We have to be careful in the Church. Sometimes we mistake discipleship for doing. We think being a follower of Christ is about doing certain things, and not doing other things. While there is doing involved, please note from Mark's gospel that the primary emphasis on being a disciple of Jesus is to

be an apprentice of Jesus, to have the privilege of being called to Him, so that you get to be with Him. The reason is because Jesus wanted to make sure those people, who were going to do what He wanted them to do, understood what He wanted, and would do it like He would do it, meaning to be like Him while they are doing it. How can you be like Him if you do not know Him? How can you really know Him if you do not spend time with Him? This forever changed the landscape of religion from rituals and following regulations, to being in a living relationship with your teacher. What is unique about the Church and being a Christian is that you may get tired of doing, but you never get tired of being with. The key to the Church is being a people who are with our Master Jesus Christ. The wisdom of God is that He knows sometimes His kids will get tired of doing, but they will never get tired of being with, and that is how He energizes us to accomplish what He wants us to accomplish. For example, I get tired of doing things for Celisa, I really do. Every man here knows you do with your wife as well. But I never get tired of being with her. At home, I never get tired of working with her, but I do get tired of working for her. Do you see that difference? You do not work for Jesus. You, as part of the Church, work with Jesus. Even though we may get tired of doing what we are doing, we will not quit doing it because we never get tired of being with the One we are doing it with. So there has to be a shift in our thinking. You have to quit thinking you work for God! This church does not work for God! He, as the head, is in every project with us. We are the body, and we get the privilege of working with Him! I honestly believe the reason I love farming so much is because my parents have never had me work for them, but I have had the privilege of working with them ever since I have been a kid. The reason I love farming is because I get to do it with my mom and dad, and I do not know if I would love it if I did it without them. Could that be why you are tired of doing what you are doing? Could it honestly be why some of us look like we look? You would think we had been employed by God instead of understanding we are in a partnership with Him, and that He has constituted us as the 12, as the New Testament people of God. This is not Donald Trump and The Apprentice. You are not going to hear

the words "you are fired". You are part of the 12. Discipleship is about a relationship with God. Through the Word, and the Spirit, we live in a living relationship with Jesus Christ, please do not forget that.

Now, we are with Him so that we might be sent out. I want you to see this training you are going to get. You and I, as the Church, are going to get to be with Jesus because we have been called by Him and responded. So we get to be with Him, but the purpose of being with Him is so that He can send us out. He calls us to Him and lets us spend time with Him, and then we learn to be like Him, and learn to get sent out to do what He did. But while we are doing what He did, the way He did it, He wants us to be like Him while we are doing it. This may be the reason we are not truly influencing the world. Because when some of us do business, we are not doing it like Jesus would have. When some of us speak up at the coffee shop, we do not speak up like Jesus would have at that moment. When we get between that rock and a hard place, and the crowd is pressing on us, and we feel like we are going to be crushed, we do not exit the way Jesus would have exited. Therefore the people feel like they were a bother. Do you see what Mark is saying about us as a people of God? The reason we are in a relationship with Him is so that we can be sent out to preach and cast out demons. Now we know this specifically had a literal meaning to the 12. But they would do the very thing that Jesus is doing. He is preaching and casting out demons and now He has called a group to Himself to be like Him, and to go out and do the exact same thing He has been doing. Now there is one sense that this is confined to the Apostles, but there is another sense in which every person in the Church, as the disciples, is involved in the same Kingdom business. This means when you come to Christ and get to hang with Him, and then go out to do with Him, there has to be something you stand for, and something you stand against. You cannot pick and choose one and leave out the other. There is a positive, which is preaching, and a negative which is demons, and oppression. Would it not be awesome if all I had to do is announce to people the good news of what Jesus did on a cross? No, I have to get

down where they are, and most people live in bondage. There is oppression and injustice. That is why the Church cannot just have a message of salvation from sin only, but we must live out true freedom for people. This is why the Church has led the way in education, you realize that right? Every major university that you can name in this country was founded by the Church! The reason is because we wanted our people to be set free from lack of knowledge. And now many think we should get out of that business! Who do you think paved the way for hospitals? It is the Church! Who do you think it was that took up the issue of social injustice, and social oppression? It was the Church! The reason is because God wants His people to be free, free to be who they were meant to be. So as the Church, you have been called to stand for something, and that is who Jesus Christ is. You have been called to stand against the work of Satan. That is the only reason you are getting to hang out with Jesus. Did you get that? You get to be in with Him so that you can go out from Him!

Now, they name the 12. Some have nicknames, which is cool! Simon is now Peter. Can you imagine every time he flubbed? Jesus would say rock, solid rock, and here he was like quicksand most of the time! God was not making fun, He was just reminded Peter of the potential he had as a follower of Jesus. Do you know what God calls you? You hang on to that nickname. Then there was James and John, sons of thunder. Several times they wanted to call down lightning! I love that part of our church. There are some of you that if God let you be the pastor, there would not be anyone here because you would have destroyed 90% of the Church by calling down lightning on them! But we need you! Then you get down to the no nicknames. Do you know what is significant about this part of the 12? A few of these guys went on and got great recognition, but most were never heard from again. Can I say thank you to those of you who do what you do? Even though you will never get your name in the bulletin, you will never get a plaque, and you will never have a party thrown for you, thank you for doing what you do. You are significant in the body of Christ. Thank you to those who get your name in lights and you do not let it go to your

head, but His head. There was no "Who's Who" in the religious world of Jesus' day. When you look at them, most of these names just represent names from the common people, and that is who we are at HBC. We are just common, ordinary people who God has called to do something really extra-ordinary. And as we do it extra-ordinarily, God gets the honor and glory, and that is what we desire. Have you been called? Have you responded? Are you with us in being who God is making us? We need to get up and start standing for something and get off that fence. Some of you need to put your heels in the ground and quit backing up and retreating! Say that I will cast out the demons in people's lives that God has called me to cast out. By the authority He has given me, I will be a bondage breaker; I will not keep turning my cheek. I will stand against what I need to stand against.