

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:

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Mark 3:13-19, 24-25, 33-35

“The New People of God”

Intro. Our Lord had now reached a crisis in His ministry. The religious leaders were very hostile toward Jesus because He refused to play by their rules, and because He exposed them for the hypocrites they were. They and some of the political leaders were already plotting His death. Yet at the same time, great crowds were still following Jesus, but their interest was not in things spiritual. They were interested in seeing miracles. They were hoping that Jesus would deliver the nation and defeat Rome. Only a relatively small number of people were true disciples.

The situation was beginning to look bleak for Jesus, but God is able to turn man’s evil into good. You see, the rejection of Jesus by the leaders of Israel, & even most of the Jews, opened the door for Jesus to establish a new people of God. That is why the Church exists today, totally separate from Judaism.

So this morning we are going to take a look at some truths about the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will learn how the church began. We will learn what we are to do as a church. We will find out if you are truly a part of His church. The truths we see here in our text are still relevant to us today. So let’s consider first of all:

I. THE BEGINNING OF HIS CHURCH

In v.13 we read, “And He went up on the mountain¹ and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him.” So very important did Jesus consider the appointment of the Twelve, that according to Luke’s gospel (6:12), He spent the preceding night in prayer on this mountain. Jesus was about to ordain twelve men who would be His spokesmen, His representatives to the people of Israel, & then to the world. This is a big decision and Jesus wanted to be sure that He knew the mind of the Father. What an example He is to us in regard to the importance of prayer!

Notice that He “called to Him those He Himself wanted.” According to Luke’s Gospel (6:13), this was a larger group of disciples. Then in v.14 we see that “He appointed twelve.” There had been great multitudes following Jesus as He moved from place to place and ministered. Now, He chooses twelve men from among those vast multitudes to be His special disciples, or apostles as He would also call them (Luke 6:13). He had already called them to follow Him. Now, He calls them to a special place of service. We also see in the last of v.13 that it was sovereign choice that He made based on His Own will. Jesus said in John 15:16, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit....”

The number of the disciples is significant because there were twelve tribes in the nation of Israel. Israel was chosen to bring the Messiah into the world so that through Him all the nations of the earth could be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). However, the nation of Israel was now spiritually decayed and ready to reject her own Messiah. So the Lord is calling the leadership of a new people of God in the world. I believe it is significant that Jesus did not select the twelve until after he was rejected by the leaders of Israel. God had to establish “a holy nation, a peculiar people” (1 Peter

¹ We don’t know which mountain. It was probably in the general vicinity of Capernaum [Hendriksen].

2:9), and the twelve apostles were the nucleus of this new “spiritual nation” (Matt. 21:43). If you are a part of a church that is faithful to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ & His apostles, then you are part of the new people of God on earth. God has chosen to work through us to bring the blessing of salvation to the world.

Could you name from memory the 12 disciples? Notice beginning in v.16 who Jesus selected to be His 12 apostles: “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, Philip, Bartholomew², Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus³, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.”⁴ I am not going to go into much detail about these men. I only want to make a few general points about them, and give a few specific examples. First, Christ chose common men. Many were common fishermen, or they had other common occupations. Second, they had varied backgrounds. Matthew was a former tax collector and “Simon the Cananite” was a former anti-Roman zealot. I say that because “Cananite” was an Aramaic surname meaning enthusiast or zealot. In fact, Luke calls him “Simon the Zealot” (Luke 6; Acts 1:13). The fact that Andrew and Philip both had Greek names may indicate that they were from families that had become more highly influenced by Greek culture. Later, when some Greeks came seeking Jesus, Philip & Andrew was the ones that talked to them & were involved in bring them to Jesus (Jn. 7:20-22). Furthermore, they were also different in disposition. There was Peter the optimist (Matt. 14:28, 26, 33, 35), but also Thomas the pessimist. Finally, at the beginning they were unfit to be His apostles. They lacked spiritual understanding. They lacked humility. They lacked faith. They lacked power. These men were always getting into trouble; missing the point or Christ’s teachings; saying the wrong thing; among other failures and problems.

Yet in spite of their common upbringing & weaknesses, the Lord used these men to turn the world upside down for His glory. If He can use them, surely He can use us too! That gives me hope today! It is encouraging to see what Jesus was able to do with such a diversified group of unlikely candidates for Christian service. Jesus led them patiently along, filled them with His Spirit and shocked the world with the way He used these men. I am convinced that He can and will use us, if we will place the clay of our lives in His hand and let Him mold us into what He wants us to be for His glory.

So the Lord has appointed the foundation for His Church. Now we need to know what the Church is to do & accomplish. So let’s see next of all:

II. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

When He selected them, He had three purposes in mind. I believe what they were to do is a pattern for the church today.

A. We Are to Receive Training – V.14 says, “Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him....” Christ appointed them to receive training by His personal example and teaching. They were to spend time with their Master, seeing and hearing Him, and learning whatever it He wished to teach them. Jesus would spend more time with them than anyone else. For them such

² Bartholomew is clearly the Nathaniel of John's Gospel (1:45-49; 21:2).

³ He was called Lebbaeus in certain manuscripts of Matt. 10:3 Mark 3:18. He is in all probability the "Judas not Iscariot" of John 14.

⁴ In all the lists of the apostles, the three groups of four begin alike (Simon, Philip, James).

association meant spiritual edification. They were not ready to be sent forth till they had been with Jesus for some time.

While we can't be in the physical presence of Jesus, we should "be with Him" each day in prayer & Bible reading. He should study Him, and walk in His steps. Being with Jesus should be the first priority in each of our lives. If we would be like Him, then we must spend time with Him. You can be as close to the Lord as you desire! James 4:8 says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you."

We also see a pattern for discipleship here. I am to spend time with deacons & other leaders, training them, and being an example to them. I have deacons visit with me. Then the more experienced deacons should take the new deacons visiting with them. There should be an ongoing mentoring process going on in the church today. And when you are given opportunity to spend time with one of the godly leaders of our church, you should take advantage of that opportunity. Christianity is caught as well as taught.

Furthermore, when we offer training opportunities in our church, you should take advantage of those opportunities. Like the apostles, we need training to do the work of the Lord.

B. We Are to Send Preachers & Missionaries Out to Preach the Gospel – V.14 also says that Jesus "appointed twelve, that ... He might send them out to preach." Receivers must become givers. Disciples must become apostles. The word "apostles" means "sent ones." It refers to a "representative of the king; one who speaks with the king's authority; one who must not be ignored." From the very beginning we see that the Church is to be missionary in our work. What was the message they were to preach? It was the same message that Jesus Himself had been preaching. It was the good news that God had sent His Son into the world to be their Savior of sinners. It was a message of hope, peace and blessing. The disciples were to take this message to the people and call them to come to Jesus.

Like the apostles, the faithful minister ought to be a preacher of the good news of salvation. He ought to proclaim the Word of God. This must always be his principal work. A minister who doesn't preach the true Word of God is of little use to the church of Christ. He is a lighthouse without a light, a silent trumpeter, & a sleeping watchman.

In a 2005 column for *Church Central*, church growth expert Thom Rainer says his research shows that in churches which are effectively reaching unchurched people, the pastors spend significantly more time preparing to preach than in the non-growing churches. "If time is a good measure, the leaders of effective churches prepare well for the sermons they preach each week. By a ratio of greater than 5 to 1, the leaders of the effective churches spent significantly more time in sermon preparation than the pastors of the comparison churches. Effective preachers spent an average of 20 hours a week and comparison church pastors spent an average of two hours a week working on sermons.⁵ In light of Scripture and this research, I hope you will support my efforts to give a significant amount of time to the preaching ministry that God has called me to.

Is God calling anyone in my audience to preach the Gospel? If so, you need to surrender to that call like Jonathan Turner did. Most of you have not been called to preach, but He has called you to bear witness for Him. He has also called you to serve Him. So get busy and witness for Him, and serve Him. He has called you to support preachers & missionaries with your prayers and offerings.

Finally, we also see in our text that:

⁵ Quoted in *Preaching Now*, January 18, 2005.

C. We Are to Minister to the Suffering – Note in v.15 that Christ gave them “power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.” Notice how closely connected were their preaching & healing ministries. You see, their message was to be authenticated by miracles of healing, and casting out demons. The people knew that Jesus was a Healer and that He had power over demonic spirits. When the disciples came preaching and demonstrating that same power, the people knew that their message was real and that they were truly the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, these twelve men would thus be able to continue His work when He returned to the Father. With so many sick to be healed, so many demoniacs to be set free, so much preaching needed (see 3:7-12, 14, 15), it was natural that Jesus would authorize some of His followers to have a share in the work He himself was doing, His own power and sympathy operating also in them.

Are we to continue such miracles today? I wish we could. But these miracles were unique to the apostles, as stated in 2 Cor. 12:12. Oh, some people on TV and elsewhere claim to be able to heal and such. Well, if they can heal, let them follow the New Testament model and heal whoever they meet that needs healing like Jesus and the disciples did! No, these people only appear to heal those who come to their crusades, or who send them money. We do not need to validate our message with those kinds of miracles. We have the written eyewitness record of these miracles, validating the Gospel message. Furthermore, every time Christ saves a soul and delivers a sinner from the grip of his or her sins, He is validating His message. Every time an alcoholic or drug addict is set free, He validates His message. Every time a marriage is put back together He validates His message. Every time a redeemed saint of God can stand and give testimony to the live-changing, soul-saving power of the Lord Jesus Christ, He validates His message!

Even though this commission to do those kinds of miracles does not apply today, the end result of their work is to be continued by the church. We are to do good works. We are to minister to the needs of people. We are to seek to alleviate sorrow through prayer, and personal ministry. We are to oppose the work of Satan. We are speak out against sin, and the devil’s deception. The Bible says, “Resist the devil, and he will feel from you.”

What a great work we are to do. After receiving training, we are to proclaim or bear witness to the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. We are to minister to those in need. Now let us move from the work of the church to:

III. THE TRUE MEMBERS OF HIS CHURCH

You can’t have a part in this great work until you become a member of the Church. The true Church is made up of the people of God. We are involved in a great work. Are you a part of God’s true Church? Well let’s see based on this text of Scripture. After Jesus was told that His mother & brothers were outside wanting to see Him (vv.31-32), Jesus said in vv.33-35, “Who is My mother, or My brothers?” And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, “Here are My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.” Matthew adds that He was stretching out His hand toward His disciples.

Our Lord was not being rude to His family when He remained in the house and did not immediately try to see them. He knew that they meant well, but their purpose was definitely wrong. If Jesus had yielded to His family, He would have agreed with His family, that He needed help! He could not let them interfere with His mission. Instead of giving in, He used this crisis as an opportunity to teach a spiritual lesson. Notice a few truths we can glean from these verses:

A. How We *Do Not* Become Members of His Church - Jesus was saying that blood relation does not give anyone an advantage spiritually. Being a person who is a Jew or even a part of Jesus' own physical family will not save anyone.

Likewise, physical birth into a Christian family does not make you a Christian. You need to have your own personal faith in Christ. For example, just because your parents are saved doesn't mean that you are automatically a Christian.

B. How We *Do* Become Members of His Church - How does one enter into the family of God? One enters into the family of God by means of a new birth, a spiritual birth from above (John 3:1-7; 1 Peter 1:22-25). In fact, Jesus said in John 3, "You must be born again." When you are born again, you share God's divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-4) and can call God "Father" (Rom. 8:15-16). You become a part of the family of God. This spiritual birth is not something that *we* accomplish for ourselves, nor can others do it for us (John 1:11-13). It is God's work of grace; all we can do is believe and receive (Eph. 2:8-9). So you see, when you become a follower of Christ, your family is no longer just your physical family, but you also have a spiritual family. And you will find that as you grow in Christ, you will tend to feel a greater kinship with your spiritual family than with your physical family members who are not believers.

Have you been born again? If you say "yes," how do you *know* you have been born again? Here's how. Jesus said in v.35, "For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother." His "family" is made up of all those who do the will of God. The test of relationship with Jesus is obedience to His Father, not merely reciting a creed, or expressing religious emotion. There ought to be a family likeness. Jesus was always obedient to His Heavenly Father. Even so, the born again child of God will want to do God's will, and habitually do God's will. It is active submission to God's will which shows that we are truly His children.

Now I want to make it clear that Christ is not laying down the *means* of becoming His kinsmen, but the tokens that we are such. Faith is the root of obedience; obedience is the blossom of faith. Until there is a change of nature, there will not be a change in desires, and a life of obedience. You cannot do the will of God in your own strength. You must be born again, and enabled by the Spirit of God & the living Word of God.

By the way, our Lord was not suggesting that believers ignore or abandon their families in order to serve God, but only that they put God's will above everything else in life. Our love for God should be so great that our love for family would seem like hatred in comparison (Luke 14:26). Certainly it is God's will that we care for our families and provide for them (see 1 Tim. 5:8), but we must not permit even our dearest loved ones to influence us away from the will of God.

I will give you another evidence that you have been truly born again. 2 Cor. 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Even so, as you look at the 12 apostles, you see examples of men who experienced a change of life. Notice in v.16 that Simon's name was changed to Peter, "the rock." He was not that way by nature. In fact, he was just the opposite. He was outspoken and opinionated. He was subject to swings in his mood & opinion. But after Christ changed his life, he became a rock-solid leader for the Church. Levi's was changed to Matthew, "the gift of God." James and John were given the nicknames, "Boanerges - the sons of thunder."⁶ We commonly think of John

⁶ This Hebrew nickname is given only by Mark and the reason for it is not clear. It may refer to the fiery temperament revealed in Luke 9:34 when James and John wanted to call down fire on the Samaritan villages that were unfriendly to them.

as the Apostle of love, but he certainly did not begin with that kind of reputation, nor did James his brother. Even so, Christ is still changing lives today, and it is through changed lives that Christ can work best.

C. Who May Become a Member of His Church - Again, Jesus said in v.35, “For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother.” The word “whoever” is very broad. “Disciples” other than the Twelve were certainly also included. It means black and white, red, brown, and yellow; male and female; old and young; rich and poor; bond and free; educated and unlettered; Jew and Gentile. But note also the exclusiveness: those and those alone who born again, who do God’s will are included.

Will you become a part of the family of God, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ? You may, if you repent of your sins, and put your faith in Christ.

I have shared with you about the beginning of the Church, the mission of the Church, and the true members of the Church. Finally, I want to share with you:

IV. A WARNING FOR HIS CHURCH

He said in vv.23b-25, “How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.” Though these words were spoken in relation to another subject, they certainly apply as a warning to the Church today. This is why Jesus prayed for unity. Three times in John 17 Jesus prayed that His people “may be one” (vv.11, 21-22).

We need to take these words to heart, for this is an ongoing problem that churches face. In fact, studies show that about ¼ of all churches experience a conflict within the previous two years that led some people to leave.⁷ The divisions of Christians are one great cause of the weakness of the visible church. They often absorb energy, time and power which might have been well bestowed on better things. They furnish the unbeliever with a prime argument against the truth of Christianity. In light of this, we need to do all we can to keep this or any other church from becoming divided.

So what should we do? First, let us focus on our mission to others. When we set our minds on the needs of others, it’s impossible for us to be divided. Churches divide when they have an inward, self-centered focus. Secondly, let us resolve to avoid all differences, dissensions and disputes over non-essentials. We cannot be too jealous about the truth of the Gospel. But it is too easy to suppose that mere religious traditions are equal to the Gospel itself. Let us be ready to concede much, and make many sacrifices for the sake of unity and peace.

Conclusion: The greatest group of people on earth is the true Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. What sweet fellowship we can have. What love! We also are on a great mission, to save souls from sin, and lead them to experience new life in Christ. Don’t you want to be a part of the true people of God? If you are not yet a born-again Christian, then I invite you to be saved today. If you are already saved, but not an active member of a local church, then I invite you to become a part of this church. Join us in this great work. Furthermore, those of you who are already members, are you doing your part to help us fulfill our mission? Are you being trained? Are you supporting the preaching of God’s Word with you prayers, your presence, and your offerings? Are you helping us to minister to the sick, & those in need? If not, it is time to get involved in this great work. Finally,

⁷ Christianity Today, March 09, 2009, p. 16.

are you helping to preserve the unity of our church? Let's trust God to enable us to make our church a united church on mission for Christ!

Sources: Alan Carr, notes from sermon on Mark 3:13-19 (www.sermonnotebook.org); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975); Alexander Maclaren, *Expositions of Holy Scripture*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 4 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1983); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); A.T. Robertson, *New Testament Word Pictures*, Vol. IV (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931, accessed through Online Bible); J.C. Ryle (1816-1900), *Mark: Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1993); Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Diligent: Mark* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987). Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). Albert Barnes read, but nothing added.

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