

FOLLOWING JESUS

LUKE 6:12-19

God Is The One Who Chooses Us To Follow Him. We Will Then Follow Him According To Our Love And Faith.

I. The Selection Method (Vs 12)

Worship Is The Method By Which We Determine God's Will For Our Lives.

- A. No Particular Time
- B. Alone With God
- C. Worshiping God

II. The Selection Process (Vs 13-16)

God Elects Us For The Purpose Of Serving Him And Humanity.

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- B. Their Names: (14-16)
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 - 2. Andrew
 - 3. James
 - 4. John
 - 5. Philip
 - 6. Bartholomew (Nathanael)
 - 7. Matthew
 - 8. Thomas
 - 9. James (Son Of Alphaeus)
 - 10. Simon (The Zealot)
 - 11. Judas (Thaddaeus)
 - 12. Judas (Iscaiot)

III. The Selection Pool (Vs 17-19)

JESUS INVITES ALL INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.

- A. From all over the world (17)
- B. To receive a touch (18)
- C. To reach out and touch (19)

Following Jesus

Luke 6:12-16

We left off last time with Jesus preaching, teaching, and healing in a relatively hostile atmosphere. In this morning's text, we find Jesus in a more congenial setting. The main event in this pericope is the choosing of the 12 Apostles. There is so much to get from this text but I want to focus on what it means to follow Jesus. We will meet three different categories of people. The first is the crowd or what is commonly referred to as the multitudes. There is always a group of people who are interested in the teachings of Jesus and the benefits they can receive from Him. In other words, there are sick people who want to be healed, demon possessed people who want to be free from demonic torment, and people who are just curious to get a glimpse of the latest phenomenon.

Next there are the disciples. These are people who have started to see beyond the miracles and have gotten insight into Who Jesus really is. They have accepted His claims to be Messiah as credible. They have accepted His teachings and have decided to follow Him. The word for disciples in Greek can mean a student of a particular school of thought, a student under the tutelage of a particular teacher, a subscriber to a certain school of thought or philosophy, or a dedicated follower. Disciple in the New Testament means a person who has dedicated themselves to embracing Jesus as Messiah, accepting His teaching as God's Word, and a conscious decision to obey Jesus and His teachings.

So everyone starts at the crowd level. They observe or receive a miracle from Jesus and listen to His teaching. Out of this crowd, several people come to believe in Jesus and become disciples. They decide to follow Him and obey Him.

And then this morning we will see that out of all the disciples, Jesus will choose 12 to be His special Apostles. The word apostle in Greek means a messenger, a representative, or an ambassador. It can mean anything from a mailperson to an official ambassador of the royal court. The word apostle will be used in at least two different ways in the New Testament. In the technical sense, it refers to the 12 that Jesus designates as apostle. They are often referred to as the Twelve, the Twelve Apostles, or the Apostles. In the non technical sense, the word apostle refers to Christians sent out on particular missions like Paul, Barnabas, Epaphroditus, Andronicus, and Junia (s).

What amazes me about the Twelve Apostles is that there may have been clusters of them interacting, for example, Peter, James, John, and Andrew were business partners in the fishing industry, but they would probably never run across Thomas or Matthew or others.

Or take for example, Simon the Zealot. He would have been involved with a group of Jewish political radicals who would look for every opportunity to start up a rebellion against Rome. They hated everything about being subject to being ruled by outsiders. He would have particularly hated someone like Matthew who would have been considered a sell out to Rome because he collected taxes for them. The chances are, if Matthew and Simon had met in a dark alley with no one around, Simon probably would have cut his throat.

But Jesus gathers together a very diverse group of people around Him to be in His inner circle. People who would not normally get along together, start to bond together and love one another as a result of the relationship with Christ and their calling by Him.

That's the way church ought to be. God has called us here together to bond with Him, love Him, bond with and love one another. We are gathered together under the lordship of Jesus Christ. There is to be no racial, gender, ethnic, or cultural discrimination in the church. We are God's children and one another's brothers and sisters.

And we will see this morning, God's calling on our lives comes a great deal of responsibility. But we don't often give that much thought. I'm not going to say where this happened, but I overheard this conversation between our children's pastor and one of our deacon's children. The children's pastor said, "Benji, it's about time we have a serious talk about Jesus. Would you like to have Jesus in your heart?" Benji rolled his big brown eyes and answered seriously, "No. I don't think I want that responsibility." Isn't that kind of the way we approach our Christianity? It's comfortable for us to just be part of the multitude. We'll watch the wonderful things Jesus does, and even receive many of the blessings, but we don't want to get too involved so we'll continue to worship at a distance.

The main idea of this morning's text is this. **GOD IS THE ONE WHO CHOOSES US TO FOLLOW HIM. WE WILL THEN FOLLOW HIM ACCORDING TO OUR LOVE AND FAITH.** Jesus made this principle quite clear on several different occasions. The more we come to realize what Jesus has forgiven us of, what He has done for us, and what He continues to do for us, the more we will love Him. The more we love Him, the more our faith will grow and the more we will want to serve Him and one another. The one who has been forgiven of much loves much; the one who loves much serves much. So let's get into this morning's text.

I. THE SELECTION METHOD

In verse 12 we are introduced to the selection method Jesus used in order to choose the 12 Apostles. Here is what we can clearly learn from this. **WORSHIP IS THE METHOD BY WHICH WE DETERMINE GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIVES.** In other words, when trying to determine what God has planned out for us to do, and if we are going to live authentic Christian lives, we need to learn to worship God regularly, and especially before and during we make important decisions. That assumes that we desire to be authentic Christians and also that we know what worship is. I'm going to oversimplify the meaning of worship here. Worship is our response to what God is doing in our lives. In other words worship could take the form of confession and repentance; praise, singing, thanksgiving and joy; reading our Bible, quiet listening, and a commitment to obey. If we want to be authentic Christians, then our entire lives must be lived in constant worship because God is always at work in our lives. So even though we meet here on Sunday morning, there is no particular time for worship.

No Particular Time

Look how Luke starts out verse 12, "One of those days." Previously Luke has described Jesus' activities on the Sabbath. Here we see no particular day in the life of Jesus. Actually, we will see no particular day turn into a very special day because of Jesus' receptiveness to God's will.

Let me point this out for us as well. No particular day can turn out to be a very special day for each one of us, if we will simply decide to live it in worship.

Alone With God

Since Jesus sensed the call of God, He got alone with God. If there is one thing that comes through clearly in all of the Gospels it is the fact that Jesus enjoyed getting alone with God. It was a time for Him to be recharged and empowered for ministry. I'm not saying that we have to go somewhere to do this, but we should have this strong desire and pull to get alone with God, to enter His presence, and quiet ourselves before Him. And even though we don't have to, it is nice to find a very special place to meet God. Because we also learn in the Gospels that the mountain is a very special place for Jesus. He often retreats to the mountains. Later we will see Him take Peter, James, and John up the mountain with Him for a very special meeting with God.

Worshipping God

When Jesus gets alone with God, He worships God. Luke tells us that Jesus spent the whole night praying to God. The word pray has a wide variety of meaning and almost all of them to the biblical notion of prayer. It can mean to vow, invoke, sing, petition for a variety of things including wisdom or to know His will. It is asking God for permission to come into His presence. It seems to me that simply being in God's presence in this very special way is an incredible privilege offered us by God. The Bible says that we are invited into the very throne room of God anytime we wish on the basis of Jesus' blood and His work of righteousness on our behalf. Please learn to take advantage of this great privilege. Practice living in the will of God on a moment by moment basis. Let us live lives of worship so that we may know and do God's will. Jesus has taught us this truth by example. **WORSHIP IS THE METHOD BY WHICH WE DETERMINE GOD'S WILL FOR OUR LIVES.**

II. THE SELECTION PROCESS

After a night of worship, Jesus goes through the selection process in verses 13-16. **GOD ELECTS US FOR THE PURPOSE OF SERVING HIM AND HUMANITY.** There are two things we must keep in mind about that statement. First of all it is God Who chooses us. And secondly, God chose us with purpose. We have destinies to fulfill. Listen to how Jesus put it:

"16You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. 17I command you to love each other. ... 19The world would love you if you belonged to it, but you don't. I chose you to come out of the world ..." (John 15:16-19 / NLT).

Disciples To Apostles (13)

Verse 13 illustrates the movement from disciples to apostles. Keep in mind, I described the three groups that were described in this passage; multitudes, disciples, and apostles.

It's morning and Jesus has just spent the night in prayer seeking God's will. Jesus gathered the group of disciples that had been following Him and out of this group, he chose the Twelve Apostles. There is nothing for the 12 who were chosen to be proud about. Jesus simply chose them by grace and in obedience to the father. If they ever became proud about their election, they just needed to remind themselves that Jesus chose Judas as one of the 12. And likewise, there was no reason for the rest of the disciples to be jealous of the 12 nor should they feel any less affirmed. It was simply God's choice.

Let's look at the word for that choice. The word used to describe choice here is eklego. It is the word we get election from. In other words, Jesus elected these 12. He chose them for a mission. God chose Israel, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He chose Moses and David. And the Apostle Paul made it clear that God chose us. If we are going to follow through with Paul's motif, then we are called with the purpose of being Christ's ambassadors. Jesus trained these 12 and entrusted the completion of His mission to them. Jesus suffered and died so that we could be right with God. The Apostles were responsible to make sure this message was spread from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the very ends of the earth. As the church, we now have inherited that mission. But for this early church, Jesus was setting up their leadership group. Let me also point one more thing out. There were the multitude, the disciples, and now the Twelve. But even out of these Twelve, Jesus chose Peter, James, and John to be part of His intimate, inner circle. Since Jesus chose 12 to be His Apostles, He is establishing the New Israel which is the church. But lest the Apostles ever get full of themselves as the chosen ones of Israel, listen to what God said through Moses about Israel's election:

“7“The LORD did not choose you and lavish his love on you because you were larger or greater than other nations, for you were the smallest of all nations! 8It was simply because the LORD loves you, and because he was keeping the oath he had sworn to your ancestors. That is why the LORD rescued you with such amazing power from your slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt” (Deuteronomy 7:7-8 / NLT).

Notice that God didn't choose them because they were powerful, intelligent, or extra holy. He chose them because He decided to love them. That's what it meant to be chosen as Israel. That's what it meant to be chosen as the Twelve. And that's what it means for us to be chosen. God simply decided to show us His love.

Their Names: (14-16)

Now let's examine their names in verses 14-16. Whenever we study through the Gospels, we should always try and see how the other Gospel writers describe the same incident. There are lists of the names in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts. John lists some of the Apostles' names. D.A. Carson made some interesting observations about the lists. He said that if we were to study the lists, we would notice that the order of the names is different. However, if we were to divide the lists into three groups of four names each, we would discover that the same names were in each grouping and in each group the first name on the list is always the same. In other words, Peter is the first name in the first group in every list. The fifth name on the list is always Philip,

and the ninth name is always James son of Alphaeus. So there seems to be a group leader in each of the three groups. And one final observation is that Peter is always first on the list and Judas Iscariot is always last on the list. I'm not sure what all that means, but it is something to note and think about.

The first four names on the list are Peter, Andrew, James, and John. You will remember from an earlier study that Jesus called Peter, James, and John at their place of business. James and John were brothers and Peter and Andrew were brothers. In addition, they were all business partners in the fishing business. Simon was Peter's given name. Simon means hearing. But Jesus changed his name to Peter which means rock. You will also see Peter referred to the Aramaic for rock, Cephas. So when reading through the New Testament, for the most part, Simon, Peter, Simon Peter, and Cephas usually refer to this Apostle. He seems to be Jesus' chosen leader of the Twelve.

Andrew means manly. He is Peter's brother, but he is not included in Jesus' inner circle of three. That is reserved only for Peter, James and John. James comes from the Hebrew name Jacob which means deceiver. But we must also remember that God changed Jacob's name to Israel which means over-comer. John means gracious. We know that James and John are first cousins to Jesus because their mother Salome and Jesus' mother Mary are sisters. James and John's father's name is Zebedee which means God is gift. Jesus nicknamed them sons of thunder. On more than one occasion we can see John and James live up to their names sons of thunder. By the way, James becomes the first Apostle to be martyred and strangely enough his brother John is the last Apostle to die.

The next group of apostles is Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, and Thomas. Philip means horse lover. And his brother's name Bartholomew means son of Talmi which means plowman. So it is reasonable to think that Philip and Bartholomew are ranchers. In the Gospel of John, it appears that Nathanael is Philip's brother's name. This would seem reasonable because Bartholomew seems to be the family name. Bar means son of and Tholomew is a Greek rendering of Talmi. So Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same person in these two different lists.

So far, we have fishermen and ranchers. How opposite could one get? Well let's continue on the list. Now we run into Matthew who was previously referred to as Levi. Matthew means a gift from God but he was certainly no gift from God to his fellow Jews. Matthew was a despised tax collector. The Jews hated him because he would collect Roman taxes from his own people the Jews.

And then we meet Thomas. His name means twin. He is also referred to as Didymus in the Bible. The event that ended up making Thomas famous was when the other Apostles told him that Jesus had risen from the dead, he didn't believe. Jesus invited Thomas to put his hands in the wounds of His hands and side. And so to this day, he is still known as Doubting Thomas. Tradition has it that he ended up evangelizing India.

The final group of four consists of James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot. This is a real interesting group of people. First in the list is James the son of Alphaeus. If you remember from his calling, Matthew was named Levi the son of Alphaeus. So it is a pretty good bet that this James is Matthew's brother. If that is the case, then

we have 4 sets of brothers: Peter and Andrew, James and John, Philip and Nathanael Bartholomew, and Matthew and James.

Next on the list is Simon the Zealot. The Zealots were a group of freedom fighters. They could also be described as terrorists. They were always fighting against Rome and trying to free Israel from Rome by military tactics. They often got killed and they made a final deadly stand at Masada.

Judas the son of James is named Thaddaeus in Matthew and Mark's Gospels. Judas means "God be praised." We don't know much about him.

However, we do know a lot about the last name on the list, Judas Iscariot. Iscariot could mean a dagger man or an assassin. Matthew and Mark refer to Judas as the one who betrayed Jesus. Luke refers to him simply as a traitor.

This is extremely interesting to me and we should ponder it as we seek God's will. Jesus spent all night in prayer seeking God's will. Therefore we could say that choosing Judas Iscariot was according to God's perfect will. How could that be? When making judgments, we must take into account that just as all the Pharisees were not bad; all the disciples were not good. One turned out to be a traitor.

This was a diverse group of men; ranchers, fishermen, tax collectors, terrorists, builders, etc. It is likely that many would have never met and it is certain that many would have hated the other. And yet, Jesus gathers them together for the purpose of building His Kingdom. These men were not united by anything other than Jesus and His mission.

One thing that I'm so glad about is that our church is made up of people from different races, cultures, ethnicities, societies, financial and educational situations ... and yet we are here involved in one another's lives. We may have never chosen one another as friends. We may have never met. And yet, here we are gathered together all in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We were each called to be part of His family, His Kingdom, and His mission. We love one another because Jesus first loved each one of us. If this is truly who we are, then we should be the model of what racial reconciliation should look like. Schools, local governments, state governments, and federal governments should come and see how people can live together in love, joy, peace, and harmony. They should be able to come here and see what social justice looks like. And for the most part, if they chose to do so, they would find that is true here at Devon Church.

God has chosen us. He has forgiven us of our sins. He continues to perfect us, and some day He will call us home to be with Him. In Bible terms He has elected us and justified us. He is sanctifying us and one day He will glorify us. And in the meantime we are to be praying and living the prayer, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, and in our lives, as it is in heaven." God chose these 12 for a very specific mission. **GOD ELECTS US FOR THE PURPOSE OF SERVING HIM AND HUMANITY.** If we are not serving or living for the purpose of glorifying God, then perhaps we have not been chosen. But as we examine ourselves, let us not despair because Jesus did also say, "Whosoever will, may come."

III. THE SELECTION POOL

The selection pool is described in verses 17-19. The truth is that JESUS INVITES ALL INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. As you sit here this morning, can you hear Jesus calling your name? Can you hear Him calling out and inviting you into a vibrant living relationship with Him? Let's not be like some of the Pharisees and turn this relationship into a dead religion of do's and don'ts. The multitude is described in these three verses. In verse 17 we learn that they came from all over the world. There are a lot of people present. Luke makes a distinction here. There is a large crowd of disciples but there was also a lot of people from all over the world who were curious, wanted to see and hear this Jesus. And some came because they had needs. Wherever Jesus went, crowds followed Him.

From all over the world (17)

Before we go on, I'd like to make a side comment. At the beginning of verse 17 Luke says that Jesus went down and stood on a level place. The word used is plateau. If you have ever gone hiking in the mountains, you know that there are often the plateaus where large groups of people could easily gather. From what follows in this chapter, it seems to indicate that Luke is describing the same incident that Matthew's Sermon on the Mount describes in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. It is interesting to compare them because Matthew will describe the material from a Jewish interest perspective and Luke will examine it from a Gentile and global perspective. It is interesting to see it from both angles.

To receive a touch (18)

Why were these crowds following Jesus all the time? Verse 18 indicates that many came to receive a touch from Jesus. People had come to hear Jesus preach about the Kingdom of God. They also came to be healed of their diseases. As we study through the Gospel of Luke, we can see that all sorts of people who were outcasts because of their illness came to Jesus for His healing touch. And many who were demonized came to be set free. All of us need these kinds of touches from Jesus. We have physical problems, emotional problems, and spiritual problems. Oftentimes demons attach themselves to our hurts, our fears, our illness, and our disappointments in life. We need Jesus to touch us through one another that we can get rid of the demonic strongholds and illnesses. Which of us can't use a touch from Jesus?

To reach out and touch (19)

And other people as described in verse 19 came to reach out and touch Jesus. It seems as if spiritual power was just oozing out of Jesus all over the place. He was so full of God the Holy Spirit, that all could see it and recognize it ... all but the religious people of the day. People recognized this power so clearly that they tried to push and elbow their way close to Jesus just so they could touch Him. They knew if they could just reach out and touch Him, they would be healed. Many were successful at touching Him and they were healed.

IV. SUMMARY

The God we worship is not a God that we need to try and reach by doing religious stuff or trying to be good enough to get His attention. The God we worship is a God that is calling out to us and inviting us into a relationship with Him. He is calling. He is looking for worshipers. He is looking for ambassadors. He is looking for lovers. **JESUS INVITES ALL INTO A RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.**

Jesus wants you. He wants me. He is constantly calling us and offering us a restored relationship with Him. He is offering us a chance to fulfill exciting destinies. But we must first fall in love with Him and leave behind our petty and self-centered pathetic lives. **GOD IS THE ONE WHO CHOOSES US TO FOLLOW HIM. WE WILL THEN FOLLOW HIM ACCORDING TO OUR LOVE AND FAITH.**

This following Jesus according to our love and faith is what I would call worship. Listen to what Bruce Larson says about modern worship:

“As we think about programming worship, I wish we could do so ... for (those) among us who are meant to be lean and hard, to fly high, to take risks, and to live out there where God is. When we come to worship, we come down from the stratosphere, bloody, broken and hungry. We feast, get up and go again as God directs our paths. Let’s not leave worship rating the performance of the preacher or the choir. Let us leave asking, ‘What did God say to me? What would God do with me?’ That’s the dynamite we can expect as we gather in God’s presence.”

As I prepare these sermons week after week, I know that God is changing me. There is something God wants each one of us to hear each week. Let me just give you a personal question to ponder. Given the fact that God wants us to hear and implement something each week, and given the fact that since I’m not such a good preacher, I’ll make it one in four, “Can you name twelve things you have changed in your life as a result of worshiping here?”