

The Christian's Calling

With the mounting opposition to Jesus' ministry, we observe that He reacts in a very interesting manner, recorded in today's text.

Mark 3:7-19

⁷ Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea ⁸ and Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him. ⁹ And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him, ¹⁰ for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him. ¹¹ And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God." ¹² And he strictly ordered them not to make him known.

¹³ And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him. ¹⁴ And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and have authority to cast out demons. ¹⁶ He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); ¹⁷ James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); ¹⁸ Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

I. The need for Christ-followers is extraordinary (3:7-12)

There is an extraordinary need in every sector of human life for genuine disciples of Jesus Christ —in business, in politics, in academics, in the professions, in the home, and in the church. Such was also the case in Jesus day. One can see in these verses that His ministry elicited extraordinary hostility, drew enormous crowds, with profound needs, aggravating powerful spiritual opposition. In his account of this moment, Luke records that Jesus spent the entire night in prayer. As he came down from the mountain, He seemed to have a strategy for addressing the extraordinary needs around Him:

II. The calling of Christ-followers is extraordinary (3:13-15)

Jesus sovereignly summons to Himself those He desires and creates out of them a new "12," a new Israel. He is not only developing new leaders and expanding His ministry, but He is also inaugurating a revolutionary movement, a new Kingdom. Although the apostles had a unique calling, we, too, are called to be His followers; in fact, the word "vocation" is from the Latin word for "calling." Our vocation, therefore, is not our occupation, as we so often think, but rather it is our life of following Christ. We notice two things about this vocation:

- 1) We are called to be with Him. Before we are ever given a task to perform, we are called to be His friends and companions. Busy Presbyterians need to remember this!
- 2) We are sent out to minister, both in word and in deed.

III. The extraordinary calling to meet extraordinary needs is given to remarkably ordinary people (3:16-19)

One might expect that Jesus would recruit well-educated, well cultivated, well-connected people for this great calling. Just the opposite. Look at the list: Thomas, the doubter; Matthew, the tax collector; John, the angry, ambitious one; and, of course, Peter, the blustering coward. It is these very men who later were accused of turning the world upside down and about whom the Sanhedrin would later say "they had been with Jesus."

Discussion Questions

1. Where do you most vividly see the extraordinary need for genuine Christ-followers in our day?
2. If our vocation is to follow Christ, what does this have to say about all the "big decisions" we have to make in our lives? How does our occupation fit into our vocation?
3. How do we best live out the calling simply to be with Him?
4. What are we sent out to do? How do we do that?
5. What are some of the excuses we tend to use because of the "ordinariness" of our own lives? How do we overcome those excuses?

Going Deeper

Write a paragraph about your calling in Christ: Who has He called you to be? What has He called you to do?