

## FRIDAY 01 April 2022 "The Others" Luke 6:15,16

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

In our world there are major selections that have global implications. Selection of host cities for the Olympic games or the World Cup are two such examples. Yesterday I left you standing with Jesus, Peter, Andrew, James and John on a historic selection day. *Jesus, God incarnate, had spent the entire previous night praying, seeking to discern WHO God the Father wanted Jesus to select to be the men He would train to take His Gospel to the world after He returned to heaven.* It was a very significant moment in history. No applications had been submitted, no petitions signed, no auditions held. Jesus' selections this day would shape the future of our world!

Luke tells us Jesus had **"...spent the night praying to God. When morning came, He called His disciples to Him and chose 12 of them and designated them apostles."** (Luke 6:12) Yesterday I explained to you that the word **'disciple'** means a person who is following another person seeking to learn to become like them. *The word "apostle" is unique to Jesus, for these are the men personally selected by Jesus, trained by Jesus and sent out by Jesus as His representatives taking His story and Gospel to the world!* I'm not sure these men fully understood the significance of what their selection meant on that day, but clearly the rest of their life, and their legacy would be defined by Jesus choosing them to be **one of His 'apostles'**.

Yesterday we looked closely at the first four men Jesus selected: **"Simon, whom Jesus named Peter, his brother Andrew, James and his brother John."** Now today, let's watch as Jesus continues calling men to Himself. I imagine Jesus pointing to them as He proclaims their name and invites them to come. Then as each man steps from the crowd, walking toward Jesus, I imagine the look on their face is a combination of privilege and anxiety. *What will it mean for them to be an 'apostle' of Jesus?* Dr. Luke names the next four men to be selected by Jesus were: **"Philip, Bartholomew (Nathaniel), Matthew and Thomas..."** A few days ago, we watched as Jesus called Philip to join His team, (John 1:43) and Philip then did as Andrew had done, and he went to find his friend Nathaniel and brought him to Jesus. (John 1:45) I wonder if you've done that my friends? Have you ever invited a friend to come with you to meet Jesus?

**Philip** was from the same town as Andrew and Peter, so I assume they grew up knowing each other, maybe very well. In the glimpses we have of Philip's life it seems he's a pragmatist, perhaps a bit skeptical, unassuming, and maybe even had a bit of low self-esteem. When Jesus saw the huge crowd that had been with Him one day, He wanted to feed them. Jesus specifically asked Philip how he thought this great feat might be accomplished. John records it for us: **"When Jesus saw the great crowd He asked Philip, 'where shall we buy bread for all these people to eat?' Philip answered Jesus, 'Eight months wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!'"** (John 6:5-7)

Yet when Philip went to find his friend Nathaniel and bring him to Jesus, Philip expressed his confidence by saying: **"We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote - Jesus of Nazareth."** (John 1:45) Unlike brash, overconfident Peter, Philip seems to have been constantly watching and learning from Jesus, with a tender and faith filled heart. Let's be careful we don't confuse **Philip the apostle** with *Philip the convert* selected in Jerusalem to be a deacon (Acts 6:5) and then who went to Samaria after great persecution broke out in Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen. (Acts 8:4-24)

Most Bible scholars believe **Nathaniel**, the friend Philip brought to Jesus, (John 1:45) also had the name **Bartholomew**. (Luke 6:14) It was not unusual for men in those days to have multiple names, just as many of us have 'middle' names today. Nathaniel was from Cana in Galilee (John 21:2) and I see some attitudes in Nathaniel by his reaction to Philip's announcement that Jesus was from Nazareth. Nathaniel had said **"Can anything good come from Nazareth?"** (John 1:46) Maybe that's one reason Jesus selected Nathaniel... so Jesus could challenge the prejudice and turn Nathaniel into a passionate friend and evangelist?

I introduced you to **Matthew** the tax collector, the other day. You'll recall Matthew also had the name **Levi**. (Mark 2:14) Some would say Jesus took a huge risk inviting Matthew to join His team of apostles, for Matthew's tax collecting reputation was well known. But Matthew changed a lot under the influence of Jesus and Matthew ended up writing the Gospel of Matthew which proclaimed Jesus to the entire Jewish world.

**Thomas**, the fourth man named by Luke in this group was actually a twin, although we never meet his twin in the Gospel account. Thomas also had another name **Didymus**. (John 21:2) and we perhaps know him best as the 'doubting Thomas' who demanded visible proof of the resurrection of Jesus. (John 20:25) But Thomas did see the resurrected Jesus and did boldly proclaim his confidence in who Jesus is and what Jesus had accomplished. History tells us Thomas became a passionate missionary taking the story of Jesus to India with great success. Millions of Indian boys have been named Thomas in his honor! Some think the number of Christians in India may be second only to China!

The final tier of four disciple/apostles named by Dr. Luke are rarely mentioned in the Gospel accounts: **"James, son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor."** (Luke 6:15) Of course the most famous of this group is the last man named, **Judas Iscariot** who we know betrayed Jesus to the arresting mob in the garden of Gethsemane. (Matt. 26:14-16, 47-51) *It has always fascinated me that we see no evidence that Jesus treated Judas any differently than all the other disciples.* In fact, in the upper room when Jesus announced one of them would betray Jesus, none of them imagined it could be Judas! (John 13:22-30)

'**James the son of Alphaeus**' is virtually unknown outside of his name appearing in the list of the disciples/apostles. Mark refers to him as "**James the younger**" in Mark 15:40, perhaps to distinguish him from James the brother of John. In that same verse James's mother is identified as Mary, and this Mary is among the women who Mark reports took spices to the tomb of Jesus on Easter morning. (Mark 16:1) Since James is identified as the '**son of Alphaeus**' some Bible scholars believe he may have been the brother of '**Matthew son of Alphaeus**'. (Mark 2:14) If so, that would make 3 sets of brothers whom Jesus selected to be His apostles! (Andrew & Peter; James & John; Matthew & James the younger)

Did you notice the disciple/apostle named "**Simon the Zealot**"? Again, we know very little of him, other than his identification as a member of the activist group called the "**Zealots**". Like the Pharisees they held strictly to the laws of God given to Moses, but unlike the Pharisees they hated the Roman authorities and looked for any opportunity to oppose them, resist them, or even in extreme cases assassinate them. We presume this Simon was a fiery, hot-tempered man, who could easily have been prone to violence. We have no evidence he was ever violent as a follower of Jesus, but he certainly had that past reputation. Is this Simon another evidence of the powerful life change Jesus can bring to any person who fully trusts his life to Jesus?

Finally, '**Judas the son of James**' is also referred to as **Thaddaeus** in Matthew's listing of the disciple/apostles. (Matt. 10:4) Thaddaeus means 'breast child' a possible reference to his close relationship with his mother, perhaps he was a tender hearted, gentle man. If so, what a contrast to Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot and Matthew the tax collector, the other three men in this group of four! *And yet, isn't that a beautiful example of Jesus reaching to a very wide spectrum of people, inviting them all to experience an authentic and life changing relationship with Him as Savior and Lord?*

I'd like us to pause right here, standing in the midst of these 12 ordinary men who have now been selected, one by one, to be with Jesus full time for the next several months, *as Jesus changes them from being a disciple to becoming an 'apostle'*. There is really no difference between you or me or any of them. Just ordinary people. Someday when we're in heaven, I hope to have a long conversation with each of them. Oh, I have so many questions about what they sensed Jesus was doing in them as they 'walked with Jesus' and opened their lives to His transforming power. And what about you and me, today? What has God been doing in us, especially if you've been a believer in Jesus a long time, or on this 'walking with Jesus' journey for a while? *Who is Jesus reshaping you to be... and why?*

Here's a song to help you ponder this...

**Today's Scripture is Luke 6:15, 16.**