

THURSDAY 31 March 2022 "Apostles" Luke 6:12-14

Good morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

When was the last time you had such an important decision to make you couldn't sleep the night before? In these days we are together on a journey with Jesus toward His Easter weekend, in my view the most important weekend in all of human history! We've come to a very important day in that journey, *so important Jesus spent the entire night before praying about the selections He would make that day.* Come with me, let's join the story as told by Matthew, Mark, and Luke in the Bible.

Luke 6:12 says **"Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the entire night praying to God."** *One of the personal trademarks of Jesus' life and training of His disciples was the frequency and priority of prayer...communication with God.* The Gospel accounts give us many examples of Jesus stepping away from the crowds, the busyness, and even at times His close friends, to have private, powerful time with His heavenly Father, Almighty God. **Why?** I believe two reasons at least:

First, *Jesus, God the Son, needed very close communication with God the Father if He was to fulfill His earthly mission on time and in every detail for God the Father's glory.*

Discerning God's guidance for each step, every action, even every word was essential for Jesus to be right every time! That's why the night before Jesus went to the cross, He prayed: **"Father, the time has come... I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do."** (John 17:4)

Second, *Jesus was always modeling for the men He was training HOW to live life fully reliant upon God for everything.*

Prayer was essential to that! These men needed to understand what real, vibrant communication with God was all about, and how to engage in it themselves, and how to teach others. That is why the only thing the disciples asked Jesus to teach them was... how to pray like He prayed. Luke tells us this in Luke 11:1 **One day Jesus was praying. When He finished praying one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray.'** Jesus loved it when His disciples were hungry to learn. May I ask, *do you have a hunger to learn how to pray like Jesus?*

Luke continues his report of that special day when Jesus had prayed all night: **"When morning came, Jesus called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also designated apostles."** Do you notice a new designation for those men closely following Jesus... **apostles**? Do you also notice there were evidently many **'disciples'** from which Jesus chose 12 who then He trained to be 'apostles'? *The word 'disciple' means 'follower'. Specifically, it means one who is following closely seeking to become like the person they follow. The word 'apostle' means one chosen, trained and sent by Jesus, as His commissioned representative into our world.*

Remember Luke was a physician who had carefully investigated to learn as much about Jesus and His years here as possible. Doctors pay close attention to detail. So, I invite you to consider there are three groups of four disciples whom Jesus chose to be His apostles, *after having spent all night in prayer about this selection process*. Let's look at them one group at a time. The first four Dr Luke names are: "**Simon (whom Jesus named Peter), his brother Andrew, James and John...**" (Luke 6:14) You may recall we saw Jesus meet Andrew and John first in John 1:36,37. They spent that day with Jesus and then Andrew went and got his brother Simon, whom Jesus then named Peter. (John 1:40-42) John evidently told his brother James about Jesus, and in Mark 1:19,20 we watched Jesus invite these two brothers to '**follow Me**'.

I wonder if as Jesus selected each man and that man stepped out from the crowd toward Jesus, they spent a moment or two talking, privately? I wonder if God allowed Jesus to see each of their futures... some of the special experiences they would each have with Jesus, and then what their lives would be like after Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension back to heaven? Did God allow Jesus to see the future about how each would be persecuted for being known as an apostle representative of Jesus, and even how each would die?

Peter was the first man selected and is almost always first mentioned when the disciples are named. Of course, Peter was a flamboyant fisherman, a natural leader, a 'get it done' kind of a man. More has been written about Peter than almost all the other disciples combined. What do you suppose Jesus might have said to Peter as He called him, and Peter stepped forward to be the first apostle?

Andrew had a special relationship with Jesus. You may recall Andrew is the one who brought the young lad to Jesus with his little lunch that Jesus multiplied and fed over 5000 people! Remember that story in John 6:9? And Andrew brought some Greek men to Jesus who asked if they could have an audience with Jesus. You'll find that in John 12:20-23. Clearly there was something special in the relationship between Andrew and Jesus.

But as you trace the story of Jesus and His apostles, *the three apostles most often mentioned as having the closest relationship with Jesus are Peter, James, and John*. These three experienced the Transfiguration of Jesus as Matthew recorded in Matt. 17, and these three accompanied Jesus into the home of Jairus the Synagogue ruler when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. Peter, James, and John had a special prayer place in the Garden of Gethsemane as Jesus was praying alone, just before His arrest on the night before His crucifixion.

The apostle John evidently had the closest friendship with Jesus and wrote 5 books of the New Testament... the Gospel of John which is his unique story of Jesus; 1, 2, 3rd John which are his short letters, and the prophetic book of "The Revelation".

Peter wrote two books of the New Testament, both which bear his name and were very significant across the Roman Empire in the first century, encouraging the early church during times of great persecution.

James is presumed to be John's older brother since his name always appears before John's, and James was the first of the apostles martyred. I presume King Herod could have selected any of the apostles for imprisonment and execution, but his selection of James to be the first martyr tells me he assumed it would have a significant silencing effect on the Jesus movement. (Acts 12:1,2)

Friends, let me help you not be confused about several different men named **James**. This James, whom Jesus selected to be one of His apostles, was neither the author of the New Testament book James nor the James who became the leader of the Jesus movement in Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension. That James was James the 1/2 brother of Jesus. I say 1/2 brother because James and Jesus grew up in the home of Joseph and Mary, and Mary was mother to both of them, but Joseph, you'll recall, was not involved in Mary's miraculous conception with Jesus. *That James did not believe Jesus was God incarnate and was absolutely not a follower of Jesus until His resurrection when everything changed for him.*

I wonder if Jesus paused right here, after selecting these four men to be His apostles. The special synergy of these five men would be very significant over the next many months, and then after Jesus returned to heaven, the Holy Spirit would do great things through these four simple fishermen whose lives would be transformed as they 'walked with Jesus'. Over the next several months Jesus would teach and train, and then send them out. *Oh, there would be others and tomorrow we'll look at the other 8 Jesus selected that day, but these four would each end up having a very special part in God's plan of bringing the story of Jesus to every corner of the world in years to come.*

What did Jesus say to them that day, after He selected them, which would set the tone for who they would become and the difference their lives would make in our world? *What has Jesus been saying to you, my friends all around the world, as He helps you see your important role first in a personal, powerful relationship with Jesus and then in what God is doing to accomplish HIS purposes in our world in 2022?* Here's a song to help you consider all this...

Today's Scripture is Luke 6:12-14.