

WEEKEND Edition 02, 03 April 2022 "Decision Time"

Luke 6:17-19

Hello my 'Walking with Jesus' friends on this WEEKEND Edition,

I hope our time together yesterday, and the day before, were really helpful to you as we looked closely at the selection Jesus made of 12 ordinary men to be not just His '**disciples**', but His '**apostles**'. *You'll recall the word '**apostle**' means a person who was personally chosen by Jesus, trained by Jesus and sent out by Jesus. These '**apostles**' were commissioned to be Jesus' personal representative to the world in taking the Gospel and the story of Jesus especially to places Jesus was not known!*

This weekend let's look briefly at what Dr. Luke wrote about the next thing which happened on that historic selection day. It has powerful implications for you and me today, 2000 years later! Luke writes: "**Jesus went down with them and stood on a level place.**" (Luke 6:17) Now that seems like an insignificant statement. Why would Luke write it? I think I know why! I've been a part of groups and teams and so have you. Sometimes you've been selected, sometimes you simply walked into the group unaware. But for all of us there's a very natural human tendency when we are with other people, regardless if we know them or not. *That natural tendency is an ugly word called "**comparison**".* Women naturally look at other women and compare appearances, body shape, hair, clothes, jewelry, makeup. Isn't that true, ladies? Men naturally look at other men and compare attire, physical stature, body build, even shoe style, and we try to guess what their vocation has been and their status in life. Am I right, guys? What's that all about? It is sadly one of the dark sides of our natural human nature. *Deep inside all of us we want to perceive that we are at least as good as others, preferably better... sadly it's true.*

As Jesus had personally selected each of these 12 men to come and join Him full time I'm guessing there was a sudden rush of pride down deep in each of them. Maybe they even thought '*Wow, I'm impressed! Jesus has selected me from all this big crowd of men. I must be special, maybe even important.*' *I suspect part of why Jesus prayed all night before this selection was He and the Father talking about how they would deal with ego's and pride and jealousy and infighting among these guys.* Some of them were related, remember I showed you yesterday there may have been three sets of brothers? Several of them were friends and from the same towns.

But I presume some of them did not know each other prior to this selection, at least not very well, and let's not forget some of them were guys with reputations that would cause upright, peace-loving citizens like you and me, to stay far away from them! Guys like Matthew the tax collector or Simon the Zealot. So, let's be honest here... Jesus has done something no intelligent leader would do! Jesus has selected a group of guys who very likely, within minutes of being called TO Jesus are already feeling the tension of how eclectic, how diverse, how very, very different they are from each other. *Already attitudes may have started taking root in the fertile soil of 'comparison'.*

So, Dr. Luke says Jesus walks down the hillside with these twelve guys and together they **"...stood on a level place."** Isn't that an interesting statement? I think Jesus was having his first team meeting by calling them to deal with their hearts of ego, and pride, and jealousy, and prejudice. He was challenging them to stand equal around Him. No one better or worse than anyone else. While Luke doesn't tell us what Jesus said, I've wondered if maybe He said something like this: *"Ok you guys, it starts right here. We are going to be a **team**. A team who cares about each other, a team who helps each other and even watches out for each other. I have chosen each of you for many reasons and you'll discover those as we spend these next months together. You each have great potential for God to do great things IN you and THROUGH you in this world. You each also have great potential for the devil to use you as a weapon to hurt lots of other people and waste your life. You will choose, every day, who has greater influence in your life, the devil or Me?!"*

Now think about that a moment friends, it's really the same for you and me, isn't it? *We each have the same choices every day.*

Luke goes on to say: **"A large crowd of His disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear Jesus and to be healed of their diseases."** (Luke 6:17) I hear three important words describing this scene: MANY... lots of people had gathered there, a big crowd. DIVERSITY... the people were from very different parts of the country and thus very diverse in their lifestyles, attitudes, backgrounds. EXPECTATIONS... this huge crowd of people had come with many and big expectations of what Jesus could do for them! The 12 guys who stood with Jesus had been among that crowd only a short while before. *Now they stood alongside Jesus having been chosen by Him to be with Him as His disciples in training to become His apostles.* What would happen now?

Luke continues: **"...and the people all tried to touch Him, because power was coming from Him and healing them..."** The remainder of Luke chapter 7 is a long message Jesus evidently preached to this huge crowd of people. It appears Jesus was walking among them as He talked, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, and even casting out demons from very sick people. The 12 watched and listened intently. *School was in session!* Jesus spoke of a radical lifestyle which would be God honoring and very different from the way most people lived anywhere in the world. *A lifestyle He would model for them and make possible for them if they would turn from the evil in their hearts and turn to God and learn from Jesus.*

Then Jesus seemed to summarize this historic day with these words: **"I will show you what it is like when a person comes to Me and hears My words and puts them into practice. It is like the man building a house who dug down deep and laid the foundation on a rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built.**

But the person who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation. The moment the torrent strikes that house it collapses, and its destruction is complete." (Luke 6:46-49)

Jesus had come to speak God's truth and to challenge everyone to look closely at their lives to see where they might be disregarding or rejecting God's truth. *Jesus was predicting that in everyone's life, no matter where you live or who you are, there will be storms... that's reality in the human experience.* All types of storms. Medical health storms with illnesses of all types. Financial storms when what you have is not sufficient for the needs you face. Relational storms when discord turns to conflict, even in the family. Emotional storms where your heart and mind are overwhelmed with worry, fear or many other emotions. *Jesus was saying... storms are part of life and only those people with strong life foundations, building their lives on God and HIS truth, can withstand the storms.*

As the people listened that day their hearts were stirred, and their minds challenged. As they watched, they saw God's power unleashed in healing people and delivering them from the devil's bondage. *Lives were being changed; hope was replacing despair.* The 12 men Jesus had selected were more than simply onlookers, bystanders...they were students learning from the Master. The more they learned of Jesus' truths, the more time they spent with Jesus, the more they opened their lives to Jesus working His spiritual refinement in them... *the more these ordinary guys would become very powerful forces in the hand of God, pushing back the evil darkness in this world, one person at a time.*

This weekend I'd like to invite you to walk around in this crowd. Who are you most like? The deeply wounded needing the power of Jesus to help and heal you? The angry or prideful needing Jesus to set you free from your soul bondage. The ill needing Jesus' healing power? The demonically oppressed needing Jesus' deliverance? *Or are you like one of those ordinary 12 men? Are you seeking to follow Jesus and become all Jesus is trying to refine you to be for God's glory?* Let's make this weekend a significant one as you and Jesus spend some time reflecting about the future, HE would like for you!

Today's Scripture is Luke 6:17-19.