

Message #9**Mark 3:7-21**

Many years ago there was a man I know who was in a church that was not carefully expounding the Scriptures. It was not a church that was feeding him or his family. He went to the minister and confronted him and told him it does not appear that you are studying to feed us. He said if it doesn't change, I am leaving. Well the leadership of the church came and said you do not have any right to leave. They said you need to hang in there because eventually things will get better. Well, they did not get better and the man left and went to a church where he and his family were carefully taught the Word of God. This idea that you must hang in there was not a ministry philosophy patterned after Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ had a philosophy of ministry that demonstrated a truth that if My ministry is not wanted, we will take it elsewhere and we will change our tactics. Never is that point more evident than here.

At this point in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ there are three main problems:

(Problem #1) - There is a major plot to destroy Him among the Pharisees and Herodians.

(Problem #2) - Jesus has a major popularity with the vast majority of people.

(Problem #3) - Jesus still has much preaching to do in many places before He goes to Calvary.

WHEN A PLOT FORMED TO DESTROY JESUS CHRIST IN CAPERNAUM, HE WITHDREW HIMSELF FROM THE SYNAGOGUE AND CHANGED HIS MINISTRY STRATEGY BY MOVING TO THE SEA AND BY GOING UP ON A MOUNTAIN TO CHOOSE TWELVE DISCIPLES.

Now Jesus still has a lot of ministry to accomplish before He goes to the cross. He is traveling with His team that to this point is Simon, Andrew, James, John, and Levi, better known as Matthew.

After Jesus had shown He was the Lord of the Sabbath in the synagogue, His ministry moves to three different locations where three different kinds of things happen:

MINISTRY MOVEMENT #1 – Jesus withdraws to the sea with His disciples. **3:7-12**

Now remember Jesus had been in the synagogue in Capernaum “again” (3:1) and had healed a man on the Sabbath Day. Verse 6 says the Pharisees and Herodian's were plotting how to kill Him, so Jesus decides to move out from the Capernaum synagogue.

Jesus decided to take His disciples to the Sea of Galilee and a huge crowd followed Him. The fame of Jesus Christ was spreading. Some have estimated that there were tens of thousands of people following Christ and they traveled great distances to see Him. In fact, it is specifically stated that people were traveling to see Him from all directions and all distances:

- 1) There were people from Galilee. **3:7a** - travel at least 30 miles
- 2) There were people from Judea. **3:7b** - travel more than 100 miles from south
- 3) There were people from Jerusalem. **3:8a** - travel more than 80 miles from south
- 4) There were people from Idumea. **3:8b** - travel more than 120 miles from southeast
- 5) There were people beyond the Jordan. **3:8c** - travel more than 60 miles from east
- 6) There were people from the east coast from Tyre and Sidon. **3:8**

Travel more than 50 miles to the northwest from Mediterranean coast.

Verse 8 says that “a great number of people” heard all He was doing and they came to Him. This is a “massive response.” As one commentator said, there were “hordes followed by hordes.”

Now the thing that is drawing a lot of these people to Him is “all that He was doing,” not necessarily all that He was teaching or preaching. Christ was preaching that He was the One who could forgive their sins and get them into the Kingdom. But it was not His preaching that was attracting these people. Here is the big problem. The problem is He was doing things to validate His preaching and teaching and the people were responding to what He was doing and not what He was preaching and teaching.

This is still the problem today. Most people are not interested in a true preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Most are interested in religious action. **What is even more sad for many ministers is that they get seduced by the popularity of the big crowds and they lose their focus on preaching and teaching. Jesus never lost His focus.**

According to **verse 9**, Jesus told His disciples that they should get a boat and stand ready for Him because the crowds were crowding Him. He was in danger of being crushed because of the numbers of people. In fact, the word “crowd” in **verse 9** is one that means to really compress a person very narrowly (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 207). Jesus was literally in danger of being crushed, so He asked His four fishermen disciples to get a boat so He could get out in the water away from the crushing crowd. Now the boat had to be big enough for Him and His men, but it had to be small enough to keep near the shoreline. This boat was not initially a pulpit boat, but a refuge boat. Since these guys had owned a fishing business, getting their hands on a boat like this was no problem.

Now the reason He needed this boat was because He had healed so many people that people with any affliction wanted to get near Him to touch Him (**verse 10**). **Notice the text says they “pressed around” Him.** Those Greek words mean they literally are falling on Him; as one commentator said, they “knocked against Him.”

The reason they are falling on Him is because they want to touch Him because of their “afflictions.” What is interesting about the word “afflictions” is that it is a word that speaks of a disease or suffering that is due to Divine chastisement or punishment (*Ibid.*, p. 280). **This is significant because the people are admitting that in order to escape Divine punishment they must reach out and touch Jesus Christ.**

There is critical theology here. Jesus could have just pronounced everyone healed, but He does not do that. **What this illustrates is that if you are to have your sins forgiven so that you will escape the Divine wrath of God, you have to personally reach out and touch Jesus Christ by faith.** In other words, God will not pronounce some generic blanket of forgiveness on you; you must personally, by faith, touch Jesus Christ.

According to **verse 11**, whenever unclean spirits saw Him, they would fall down before Him and start shouting “You are the Son of God.” Jesus would warn them not to tell who He was (**verse 12**). David Garland said it well when he said, “the ravings of demons can never be an agent of revelation” (*Mark*, p. 127).

This is so sad because the demons know who Jesus Christ is and they bow down before Him. But these tens of thousands of people have no idea. They knew Him as a miracle worker, not as the God/Son/Messiah/Savior.

MINISTRY MOVEMENT #2 – Jesus goes up the mountain to appoint twelve disciples.
3:13-19

As all of this was happening, Jesus ascended up a mountain. Tradition says that He ascended “the Horns of Hattin” which is the most prominent mountain on the west side of the Sea of Galilee.

According to **verse 13**, Jesus only took those with Him “whom He Himself wanted.” **The emphasis here is that He called to Himself those that He wished to call. This is about His calling and His election.** He did not take everybody with Him up on this mountain. You did not get to go up this mountain unless you received a very specific invitation.

Now we are not sure how many He invited up on this mountain, but what we do know from **verse 14** is that out of the group He selects twelve, who are His Apostles. Matthew would tell us that the twelve were selected for each of the twelve tribes (Matt. 19:28).

Mark mentions “the twelve” ten times: 3:14; 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10, 17, 20, 43 and he will refer to this group as “the eleven” one time in 16:14. **Mark uses this to refer to a very specific and elite group of Apostles. This is not a reference to every believer.** If you see and understand this point then you will easily realize that the things in Mark 16:14-18 are things specifically given to the twelve or the eleven. These things are not given to us.

Verse 14 says He appointed them. This is His Divine choice. These twelve had nothing to do with this choice. These twelve did not originate or manipulate anything. This is His choice. Mark says there are three reasons why:

(Reason #1) - So they could be with Him (**3:14a**) - He will teach them and train them.

(Reason #2) - So He could send them out to preach (**3:14b**) - They will be His witnesses and preachers.

(Reason #3) - So they could have authority to cast out demons (**3:15**) - so they could point others to faith in Jesus Christ.

This is an appointment and these assignments are given to these twelve, not to us.

Now in **verses 16-19**, we get a list of the names of the twelve that “He appointed.” These are His choices and this is His team.

From this list we may observe that four are fishermen; one is a tax collector; one is a radical zealot; and six we don’t know a thing about. **From the list of these twelve we may observe that they are all sinners; they all have weaknesses and there is not a Biblical scholar or professional preacher or seminary graduate in the group.**

- 1) He appointed Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter (name means rock or stone). **3:16**
Peter was a fisherman and an outspoken and opinionated leader of the group. He wrote two N.T. books.
- 2) He appointed James, the son of Zebedee. **3:17a**
James was a fisherman who became part of the inner circle of Jesus. He became a great leader of the church and was the first to be put to death for his faith.
- 3) He appointed John, the brother of James. **3:17b**
John was a fisherman. He became known as the “beloved disciple.” Only one not put to death for his faith. He wrote five N.T. books.
Jesus named James and John Boanerges, which means “sons of Thunder.”
This name describes their original character—they had explosive tempers.
- 4) He appointed Andrew. **3:18a**
Andrew was the brother of Peter and a fisherman. He is known for bringing people to Jesus. He influenced Peter into coming to Christ (John 1:40-42).
- 5) He appointed Philip. **3:18b**
Not much known except he was from Bethsaida, pointed Nathanael to Christ (John 1:45-46, 48).
- 6) He appointed Bartholomew. **3:18c** - Known as Nathanael, a man of truth (John 1:47).
- 7) He appointed Matthew. **3:18d** - Known as Levi the tax collector (Mark 2:14).
- 8) He appointed Thomas. **3:18e** - Known as a doubter. He was loyal to Christ and willing to die for Him (John 11:16). He was willing to believe truth when it was revealed to him (John 20:28).
- 9) He appointed James, the son of Alphaeus. **3:18f** - Nothing known about him.
- 10) He appointed Thaddaeus. **3:18g** - Nothing known about him.
- 11) He appointed Simon the Zealot. **3:18h** - Some sort of political zealot out to overthrow Roman government. Outspoken and fearless.
- 12) He appointed Judas Iscariot who betrayed Him. **3:19** - Judas is the only disciple that comes from Judea. He was focused on money. He was a thief and miser (John 12:5-6). He is the only one of the twelve who goes to hell when he dies.
Judas teaches us it is possible to look saved and act saved but not be saved and end up in hell (Matt. 26:20-25).

These are the twelve. These are His choices.

MINISTRY MOVEMENT #3 – Jesus goes home to Capernaum. 3:20-21

After Jesus made these selections, He came back down the mountain and went to His headquarters in Capernaum. When Jesus finally got back to Capernaum, the crowd was so large that Jesus and His disciples could not even eat a meal. There was no room.

To further complicate things, His own people from Nazareth, including His mother and brothers (**Mark 3:33-34**), went out to take Him into custody because they were saying He has lost His mind. People were alleging that Jesus had some mental breakdown, bordering on the verge of insanity.

Here is one of the great tactics of Satan. When you are committed to Jesus Christ and the Word of God, sometimes your own family members will be used to try to stop you and may try to give others the impression that you have lost your mind. **It has never been popular to love Jesus Christ and the Word of God.**

If you preach the Word and stand for the truth about Jesus Christ and the grace of God, some will say “you are out of your mind.” They said that about Paul (Acts 26:24). These same kinds of things were said about Luther and Bunyan and Hus and Wycliffe and Tyndale.

One of the first opinions the world had of Jesus Christ is that He was some madman.

PARTING THOUGHTS:

- 1. God calls unlikely people to salvation, sanctification and service. These are His choices.**
- 2. Sometimes it is God-honoring to move. If a church is drifting from reverent worship and carefully understanding God’s Word, it is time to move on. Jesus did not stay put in a Synagogue where He was hated.**
- 3) There is only one way to escape the wrath of God and that is to personally reach out by faith and believe in Jesus Christ.**