

It All Comes Down To A Choice**Luke 6:12-16**

Do you remember growing up and the variety of ways you may have used to make choices? If you were out at recess and needed to choose sides for baseball or kickball teams, everyone lined up, two captains were chosen and then they went back and forth calling kids to be on their team.

Another way was to use the eenie meenie minie mo, catch a monkey by the toe, if he hollers let him go, eenie meenie minie mo. My mother told me to choose the very best one and you are not it.

Then there was duck duck goose. Everyone sat down in a circle and the person who was it walked around tapping each person on the head and saying duck, duck, duck, duck until they chose someone by saying goose. That person had to get up and chase the other person and try to catch them before the person who was "it" sat down in the empty spot.

There are the old standbys of rock, scissors, paper or drawing straws or flipping a coin.

Jesus had another method. We read about it here in our passage and we read about the choices He made.

Our points to consider this morning are as follows:

The private supplication of Jesus

The public summit with Jesus

The personal selection by Jesus

We'll see these points in **Luke 6:12-16**.

I. THE PRIVATE SUPPLICATION OF JESUS – v. 12

Right away in this verse we read something that appears on the surface to be rather unimportant.

"One of those days".

A. His Criticism Was Increasing – v. 12a

We have all had those kinds of days. You get home from work or from school at the end of a very long day and someone asks how your day has been.

With a feeling of exasperation you respond "it's been one of those days."

You got stuck in traffic.

Your boss handed you a report that needed attention or upped the deadline on a report that was due tomorrow.

You spilled coffee in the car.

The dishwasher broke down and oozed water all over the kitchen floor.

You're late for an appointment and you get a call that you need to go pick up the grandkids.

Your teacher gave you extra homework.

You bombed a test.

Your vacation plans had to be changed.

It rained on your picnic.

It's been one of those days.

So what does Luke mean when he begins this section with that statement?

Was it just another one of those ministry days in the otherwise very busy ministry schedule of Jesus?

The previous section talked about a couple of Sabbath days. **Was it another Sabbath day?**

Just what kind of a day was it for Jesus?

If we have learned anything about Jesus in the early days of His ministry we have learned that it was met with skepticism and opposition by religious leaders.

Yes He healed many.

Yes He taught with authority, passion, and zeal.

Yes He had great crowds that followed Him hanging on every word He said because it was new and fresh and challenging and because He could speak and people were healed.

But in addition to the great crowds, He had great criticism. The Pharisees, the religious establishment didn't like what He was saying, challenging their traditions, challenging them.

We read at the close of verse 11 that they were furious with Him and began to conspire with others on how to dispose of this threat. Remember from last week that we said the word furious was akin to madness or being insane. They were more concerned about how to put Jesus to death than they were their own eternal spiritual well-being.

The use of the word “day” does not refer to a specific calendar day in a year. It has to do with a phase in the ministry of Jesus. Opposition to His ministry continued to mount. Conflict was growing and the apex of His ministry was coming nearer to the time of His crucifixion. Who would have thought that the ones who were to be the guardians and examples of the Law were the ones who now were plotting to break it? It was on one of those days when opposition was growing toward Jesus that Luke is writing about.

With all the growing tension stirred up by the religious elite, it was now time for Jesus to prepare for His departure. Part of that preparation was to initiate a succession plan.

One source defines succession planning as “a process for identifying and developing internal people with the potential to fill key business leadership positions in the company. Succession planning increases the availability of experienced and capable employees that are prepared to assume these roles as they become available.”

Succession planning is a process whereby an organization ensures that employees are recruited and developed to fill each key role within the company. Through your succession planning process, you recruit superior employees, develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities, and prepare them for advancement or promotion into ever more challenging roles. Actively pursuing succession planning ensures that employees are constantly developed to fill each needed role. As your organization expands, loses key employees,

provides promotional opportunities, and increases sales, your succession planning guarantees that you have employees on hand ready and waiting to fill new roles.”

The Association Resource Center identifies five key elements of the succession planning process.

1. Identifying key positions for which a succession plan is necessary.
2. Identifying the successor or successors.
3. Identifying job requirements.
4. Building competencies.
5. Assessing progress.

It was in the mind and plans of Jesus to have such a plan. When you consider what the industry leaders have to say about the criteria for selecting and then handing over responsibilities, Jesus’ methods don’t stack up. Yet we read in Acts that those chosen by Jesus turned the world upside down.

Jesus didn’t have a team assembled and when He did get them together as we will see, they were a bunch of misfits. Although Jesus had crowds who followed Him He was to this point primarily alone in ministry. That was all about to change.

What Jesus did first in the choosing of those who would succeed Him in ministry doesn’t even show up as an essential component of management consultants who help develop a succession plan. Let’s consider for a moment where Jesus began.

B. His Communion Was Intense – v. 12b

One of the things we have discovered early on in our study of Jesus through Luke is how essential prayer was to Him. It’s something we will continue to see throughout His ministry. The first thing we see here is that He went out to a mountainside to pray. Again, Luke the historian finds the location to be insignificant. Perhaps he doesn’t want to take away from the importance of what Jesus did and that was to pray. Perhaps if people knew the

location they might be tempted to set up little booths and sell trinkets and bumper stickers. “I prayed where Jesus prayed.” There might be some little shrine or plaque commemorating the event and the spot. “On this day Jesus prayed here for the 12 Apostles.” The where and when is not important, the what is. He prayed. But He didn’t just pray, He prayed all night. In the decision He was about to make, He needed the guidance of the Father. This decision would literally change the world, not just then, but on to today.

Here’s something else about Jesus’ prayer life. He never acted independently from the Father. We read time and time again in the Gospels that Jesus prayed, especially before important events such as we see in this passage.

What a great lesson for us. **How much do we labor in prayer or do we even pray over decisions we are about to make, especially when they are major decisions? How many disasters would have been avoided if we had only spent some devoted prayer on an issue?** Instead we jump into decisions without prayer and then have to live with the disastrous results all because we failed to pray. **Do we just pray once or twice for God’s will and for His peace or do we labor in prayer with God?**

Here’s the thing I find, if we don’t pray about the little things, like praying over meals or for our daily bread, we’ll never pray about the big things.

Jesus spent all night praying. It was a priority. That means He was at it for 10-12 hours. **If you totaled it up in a day would our prayers total even 10-12 minutes?**

That phrase **“spent the night praying”** is only one word in the Greek. It conveys a deeper meaning than that He just spent all night praying. It speaks of keeping at a task through the night and gives the sense of toiling. Prayer is hard work.

And His prayer was to God. Now we don’t get this in the English translation, but in the Greek construct of the phrase it means more than that He spent the night praying to God. It literally means He spent the night in the “prayer of God.” Whatever He prayed about was literally in the prayer of God. That means it was an inter-Trinitarian prayer. You ask what in the world does that mean. It simply means that it was a prayer between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three persons of the Trinity were involved in this prayer. It means that His prayer was consistent with the will of God.

John MacArthur writes **“Therein do we see the incredible mystery of His humanity and His deity brought together. Jesus in His humanity needed to pray all night and Jesus in His deity was praying the very prayer of God.”**

I would suggest that it’s the same meaning we get when we read in **Psalm 37:4 “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.”**

Jesus’ prayer life was always consistent with the will of the Father because He delighted to do the will of the Father. It was a private time of intense communion during a period of time when there was increasing criticism. Here is the private supplication of Jesus, which then leads to the public summit of Jesus.

II. THE PUBLIC SUMMIT OF JESUS – v. 13a-b

At some point, prayer must move from the theoretical to the practical, from words to action. Morning came and Jesus set about the task of making some selections. He had His answer.

Now, there is one camp who asserts that Jesus prayed all night to know who the 12 should be. From the group of all His followers who should He pick to be the 12?

There are others who say that Jesus already knew who the 12 would be, but spent the night praying about the one who would betray Him.

Then there is another group who believe that Jesus spent the night praying specifically for the 12 much as He did in John 17 or as Paul prayed for churches.

John 17:6-19

Was Christ then praying for the choice of whom to choose from among all those who followed Him or being omniscient was He praying for the 12 who would continue His work?

A. His Call For Them To Gather – v. 13a

Coming down from the mountainside He sent word that He wanted to meet with all the disciples. How word got out or where they were all staying, even how many there were is unclear. We know by this time there were at least 72 devoted followers because on one occasion He sent them out two by two. By this time close to a year and a half into His ministry quite a following had gathered around Jesus. There could have been hundreds of devoted disciples.

Keep in mind that a disciple is a learner or apprentice, someone who has attached themselves to a teacher from whom they will learn. But as it is used here it means someone who is simply a follower. Jesus had many of them. Many who followed because of what He taught. Many who followed only because of what He did.

We will read later on that when Jesus began to really challenge His followers with hard sayings many followed Him no more. He would turn to the 12 and ask them if they would leave Him too. Peter would state for them all that they had no place else to go because He had the words of eternal life.

At other times Jesus called individuals who showed some interest in following Him, but when the

rubber of life met the road of reality, they were unwilling to follow offering temporal excuses.

Jesus called all the disciples together for the purpose of making an announcement. It must have been quite a gathering. I'm not sure anyone knew what the meeting was for. I don't envision the 12 chosen having some prior knowledge sitting up front as if they too didn't know what was going on. The disciples were called to gather for a meeting.

B. His Choice For Them To Go – v. 13b

Luke does not fill in the blanks for us about whether or not Jesus announced what the meeting was for. It doesn't say whether He told them He would be leaving them sometime and needed to choose some successors. Whatever and however it was shared, He announced that He was selecting 12 men.

But maybe you ask why 12? The significance of the number would not fall unnoticed on the minds of the Jews. After the 12 patriarchs and 12 tribes, these 12 Apostles would represent a new kind of Israel that would be gathered from all the nations of the world. They would represent the new covenant. They would not only have responsibility then, but also in the future.

Ephesians 3:20 tells us they are the foundation of the church.

Acts 2:42 and Ephesians 3:5 tell us that they would receive revelation to be taught not previously known to man.

Ephesians 4:11-12 tell us they were a gift from God given to help edify the church and build her up to maturity.

Ephesians 3:5 also tells us that they had doctrinal authority. During the missionary endeavor of Paul a dispute broke out about how Gentiles should be saved. The issue came to Jerusalem to the Apostles who heard testimony and confirmed that the just shall live by faith. There is nothing else that can be done; we are saved by grace through faith.

In Acts 3:6; Romans 15:19; and Hebrews 2:3-4 we read that they had miraculous powers to heal, which affirmed their message.

These 12 were His choice to go eventually in His stead.

Jesus made a private supplication and then had a public summit. Let's consider in closing a personal selection.

III. THE PERSONAL SELECTION OF JESUS

– v. 13c-16

Let's be clear that there were no applications sought, no resumes' turned in, no job posting listed on the local synagogue wall or with the Capernaum Chronicle. Consider His charge.

A. His Charge For the Twelve – v. 13c

These 12 men would no longer be called disciples; although that is the term we generally give them before the ascension of Jesus. They were given the title Apostles. We tend to think of the 12 as disciples in the Gospels and Apostles in Acts, but that's not the case. They were called Apostles first on this day.

An Apostle has transitioned from someone who was a disciple or learner to someone who would be an ambassador. Apostle literally means a sent one. In the very real sense of the word they were to become missionaries, the gospel representatives of Jesus. While there might still be others who followed Jesus as disciples or learners, He would devote His time, attention, and focused training on these 12. They were, after all, the ones who would carry on His ministry after He was gone. He was now beginning the process of succession planning for His ministry.

Going back to that list of five key elements for succession planning Jesus identified the positions necessary and He identified 12 successors. He identified what their job requirements would be,

built competencies for them to develop their skills and then monitored or assessed their progress.

These 12 were chosen with a special commission. **Mark 3:14** gives some further insight into what they would be doing. It says there that they would be with Jesus so that He could send them out to preach and have authority to drive out demons. Like what we consider when we think of the role of an ambassador, they would represent Christ and have His authority to speak on His behalf. An ambassador does not speak their own message, but only the message of the One who was doing the sending. They would carry on the work of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, His message to a lost world.

That was to be their charge, but when you consider the 12 He chose, none of them had any real qualifications for what they would be doing. If we were the hiring managers for the position of Apostle, they wouldn't have surfaced as top candidates. Let's consider them as we close.

B. His Challenge With the Twelve– v. 14-16

I have purposely titled this section of the outline as His challenge because that's what it was. I wish that we had time to really discuss each of the 12 men individually and maybe someday we will, but for today I merely want to introduce them. It was a challenge for Jesus because this was a ragtag group of men, raw around the edges, needing to be shaped and honed to something useable, something remarkable and given their individual characters it would be quite an undertaking.

With the exception of Judas Iscariot, all were Galileans. Judas Iscariot was from the region of Judea.

With the exception of Matthew who was probably the most cultured of the group, they were all just common, average men. There was nothing in their

resume' that stood out. They weren't leaders in their community. They had no theological training, and weren't part of the religious establishment.

You can say a lot about the tactics and antics of college basketball coach Bobby Knight. He was crude and at known to throw tantrums by tossing chairs onto the court or slapping a player for making a bad play. But one thing you cannot dispute is his ability to win. He never recruited high school standouts, all American players who were first in their respective States. He wanted to galvanize a team around hard work and discipline not necessarily talent. He recruited the seconds because he knew they would work together as a team. Michigan's Fab five from year's ago is proof that you can't take a group of five guys who were all number one' from their respective states with egos as big as the Grand Canyon and make them a team that works together. Bobby Knight chose the guys who were overlooked by other programs.

The 12 chosen by Jesus each came with baggage. They had their own rough spots, but Jesus saw in them the potential to carry on His work.

There are four lists in the New Testament naming the Apostles. They are grouped in three groups of four. Each list has the same Apostle listed first and the men in each group are the same. Matthew's account lists them in pairs probably as they were sent out two by two. Though at times they disputed among themselves who should be the greatest Peter is always listed first. Judas Iscariot is always listed last. Some we know very little about, while some have had books written by them and about them.

Peter we know to be very passionate which often got him into trouble. In a sense, he represents us all, someone who one day could be passionate for Christ ready to wield a sword in defense but the next day someone who can also deny.

Andrew was personal and personable. He was a crowd mixer and we see him bringing people to Jesus. He brought Peter. He brought the little boy with the loaves and fish at the feeding of the 5,000. He was helpful, serving, and humble.

James and John of course we know to be fiery and energetic. I suggested in an earlier message that James may have been a greater threat than Peter to Herod as James was the first martyr. He may have had terrific zeal and unabashed enthusiasm for Christ after Pentecost even though Peter was the spokesman. Peter may have been the leader, but James was probably the doer.

It's commonly believed that Philip and Bartholomew were friends before the call of Jesus.

Thomas we know to be a doubter. He was slow to decide matters, a skeptic by nature, someone who walked by sight and not by faith, but in time he would be a very devoted and faithful follower walking by faith.

Simon the Zealot was a nationalist. Anyone who was against Israel was his enemy. He had a desire to see Israel restored to freedom, to see her delivered from Roman oppression and was part of a movement to see that happen.

But why Judas? H. A. Ironside answers that question. "Remember that our Lord takes men on their profession of faith in and loyalty to Himself, and then gives them the opportunity to demonstrate the true character of that profession."

William Hendriksen also weighs in on the matter: "The shocking tragedy of Judas' life is proof not of Christ's impotence, but of the traitor's impenitence." He was given every opportunity to repent and change, but rejected the offer.

There isn't a one of us who can say that he or she is better than any one of them. I believe we are all

just like them in every respect. We're doubters and deniers. We can be greedy or gaudy. We're all tempted and we even have the propensity to be traitors. But the point of the matter is that if the Lord can mold and shape and use them, He can do the same with us if we are willing. Of the 12, 11 were willing.

that He chose us, before the foundation of the world. **Will we choose to be used by Him?**

Here are the 12. From Peter the optimist to Thomas the doubter; from Simon the Zealot a hater of anything Roman to Matthew a collector of Roman taxes.

Jesus' first call was to conversion.
 Jesus' second call was to commission them.
 Jesus' third call was to commitment by them.
 Jesus' final call was to challenge them to go to the ends of the earth with the gospel.

These men lacked spiritual understanding.
 These men lacked humility.
 These men lacked faith.
 These men lacked commitment.
 These men lacked power.
 But Jesus took them and used them and with the exception of Judas Iscariot, they would all have a role in the building of the church.

As I have said before, Jesus doesn't look at who we are, He looks at what we can become.
 It's not the talent of the man or woman that Jesus is looking for through whom He can do great things.
 He is looking for the trust the man or woman has in Him so that through them He can do great things.

It will be said in time that these men have turned the whole world upside down.
 That is our challenge.
 That is our calling.
 That is our commitment.

Only by being in Christ can we hope to be used in such a way for God's glory and His kingdom. It really does all come down to a choice. Remember