

## Luke 6B

- We have just begun one of the meatiest chapters in Luke
  - This chapter is set inside a larger theme of the tension between Jesus and the unbelieving religious leaders of the day
    - Men who looked like the picture of righteous, men who assumed they would be first in line at the Pearly Gates but in fact were earning the wages of sin: eternal death
  - A second theme Luke will continue to develop is how Jesus, as man, must rely on the Father for guidance and support in a way He's never experienced before
    - As an example to us of how we as well must learn to rely on the Holy Spirit and not on our flesh
  - Now we see Luke introduce his third and final theme
    - Jesus was preparing a group of men who would be the nucleus for establishing something entirely new on Earth: the church
    - When we consider that Luke was the author of the book of Acts, we can really trace this theme all the way into that book
      - Today we see him plants the first seeds of that discussion as Jesus makes His choice of the twelve Apostles
      - And we'll look at the difference between apostles and disciples
- These three themes work together in a unique way
  - The first two explain the third
    - The Pharisees were not honest men of God, but scheming evil men determined to thwart God and His Son
    - The Son came to do the Father's will, and His will was that Jesus would die at the hands of these evil men
    - Finally, Jesus coming death meant He must spend His ministry on earth preparing a few to carry the church forward in His absence and according to His direction

- So Luke portrays Jesus making a very important hiring decision

A guy with no arms goes to a big church to apply for a job as a bell ringer...The priest thinks "I can't discriminate against the handicapped" and he hires him.

The priest asks "How are you going to pull the ropes and ring the bells in the tower with no arms"... "No problem Father".... The guy runs up into the tower...He takes a running start at the bell and hits it real hard with his face....The bell let out a beautiful sound and the preist says "Son that is wonderful but your going to hurt your face"....

"No I won't father, watch this one"...He takes a runnung start and hits the bell dead on with his face again but this time he slips and falls out of the bell tower to his death.....A crowd gathers as the priest runs down to help. "Does anybody know this man?" asks the priest.

A bystander looks at him and says, "I'm not sure but his face sure rings a bell".

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[Luke 6:12](#) ¶ It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

[Luke 6:13](#) And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:

[Luke 6:14](#) Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew;

[Luke 6:15](#) and Matthew and Thomas; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot;

[Luke 6:16](#) Judas *the son* of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

- Luke spent most of Chaps 4 and 5 providing an overview of Jesus' ministry
  - How he was anointed by the Holy Spirit into ministry
  - How he taught with power,
  - how he performed healings,
  - how he gained popularity with the crowds
- Then in Chap 5 and into Chap 6 Luke begins to reveal the effect Jesus' ministry had on the religious leaders of the day
  - Their disagreement with His methods
  - Their offense at his message
  - And most of all, their anger at the powerful effect he was having on the people

- But now Luke takes a brief break from those themes to address the calling of the apostles
  - Jesus is about to bring along side himself 12 men
  - These men will be his students, his confidants, His friends
  - Ultimately, these 12 will become the early builders of Christ's church
  - And Jesus is going to select these men from among the many disciples that were now following him every where he traveled
- But before we look at who he selected, the verses we read this morning lead us first to consider how he prepared for that decision
  - Verse 12 tells us that Jesus went off for the night and spent the whole night seeking the Father in prayer
    - When you read in the gospels about Jesus – the Son of God – spending time in prayer seeking the Father, do you catch yourself wondering
      - Why would Jesus – who is God Himself – need to pray to God?
      - Wouldn't His thoughts already be the Father's thoughts and vice versa?
- Well consider some things we can learn from scripture

[John 8:42](#) Jesus said to them, "If God were your **Father**, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.

[John 10:18](#) "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My **Father**."

- The Father and the Son are separate – so much so that the Father can command the Son and He obeys the Father
  - But scripture also teaches:

[John 10:30](#) "I and the **Father** are one."

[John 17:22](#) "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

[John 1:1](#) ¶ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

[John 1:2](#) He was in the beginning with God.

- So the Father and the Son are one God, both existing from the beginning
  - Likewise, the Holy Spirit existed in the beginning in Gen 1:2
  - But the Spirit is separate from Jesus and the Father

[John 14:26](#) "But the **Helper**, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

- So here again, the Holy Spirit is part of God and yet is separate.
- The mystery of the Trinity – the reason it is a mystery – is that our God is three person yet one.
  - Try as we might, we cannot fully reconcile these two facts
  - Scripture teaches both truths and teaches them in such a way that they are not seen as contradictory statements
    - In other words, Scripture acknowledges both realities without the least concern for any apparent contradiction
    - Scripture simply represents as the truth the three part nature of our God
- One of the consequences of this truth is that God the Son, during his ministry on earth, took the form of man while God the Father remained in Heaven
  - Both were still God, yet by choice the Son of God assumed a form which placed a new barrier between them
  - So Jesus prayed to communicate with the Father because his human form inhibited the previously free flowing communication
    - And the Spirit became the means by which the Father restored that connection

[Phil. 2:6](#) who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,

[Phil. 2:7](#) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.

- So Jesus seeks a quiet place to pray to the Father for guidance on who to select as apostles
  - As we consider the apostles, remember that there were many disciples of Jesus but only 12 apostles
  - Jesus had large crowds following him everywhere he went all the way up till he was arrested

[Matt. 4:24](#) ¶ The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

[Matt. 4:25](#) Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and *the* Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and *from* beyond the Jordan.

- Now look again at verse 13 in Luke 6
  - Jesus called the disciples and choose 12 from among them
  - The distinction is this
    - The word disciple means pupil or student
    - But the word apostle means ones who are sent with a message or on a mission
  - All apostles are disciples but not all disciples are apostles
    - However, the Bible uses the word apostle to refer to the 12 men named in this chapter, to Matthias, the man selected to replace Judas in Chap 1 of Acts, and to Paul
    - So Biblically speaking, an apostle is anyone commissioned by Christ to plant the early church
      - The 12 apostles were selected by the Lord himself and Matthias was selected by God through a casting lots to fill the apostleship vacated by Judas

- Paul was commissioned by Jesus to become his apostle to the Gentiles
- Today I would argue that scripture does not give us the freedom to award that term to anyone
  - Rather we can be disciples, overseers, bishops, pastors, elders, deacons, prophets, witnesses, etc.
  - These are the terms used to describe the various roles of leadership God has set out in His church
  - But yet we can still see similar distinctions in how calls men and women within the church
    - He calls all believers to follow Christ – to be disciples
      - To be learners, to understand and emulate the teaching of Christ – The Word
    - But He calls some of those disciples to be messengers of a different order
      - Call them ministers, missionaries, whatever
      - They are the ones who recognize a different calling to go out with a message to spread the gospel
      - Ultimately, no matter what our spiritual gifting, if we feel God's calling to that next step of ministry, then we must recognize we are called to carry the gospel message
        - Some by teaching and preaching
        - Some by music
        - Some by service in missions
    - But all have the calling to bring the gospel message
- I find it striking that before Jesus selects these 12 men, he spends the entire night in prayer to the Father
  - Never is prayer more important than when we are facing a difficult decision – so that's what Jesus is taking time to do here

- But Consider for a moment that Jesus had walked with these men for some time already
  - It was Jesus, after all, who had selected many of them to follow him in the first place
  - He had no doubt formed ideas about who the apostles should be
  - Didn't He have enough information to make His decision
- I'm struck that Jesus was so determined to know and do His Father's will, that even though He must have felt comfortable making the choice himself, He still spent the time in prayer
  - As should we, never taking for granted that any decision we make falls outside God's care and control
- Now the apostles are listed in order of importance, with some minor variation in order between Matthew Mark and Luke
  - But all list Peter first and Judas Iscariot last
  - And as we scan this list of 12 names, take note that there is not a qualified person among them
    - No religious leaders
    - No formally trained spiritual leaders
    - No one went to seminary
    - When Jesus came upon each of them, none were actively pursuing a religious profession or even a religious education
    - In fact at least a few were outcasts, unreligious people who were considered the lowest of sinners
    - In other words, they weren't just unqualified, you could say many of them were disqualified – at least in the eyes of people in that day
- But yet they were the ones Jesus selected
  - And not just Jesus, but the Father
  - Jesus reminds us of this in John's Gospel

[John 6:66](#) ¶ As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore.

[John 6:67](#) So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?"

[John 6:68](#) Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

[John 6:69](#) "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

[John 6:70](#) Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?"

[John 6:71](#) Now He meant Judas *the son* of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him.

- Jesus reminds them that they didn't end up where they were because of their own choices
  - They didn't decide one day to be a apostle
  - That's like waking up one day and deciding to be a lottery winner
    - It doesn't work that way
    - God will choose those He wishes to elevate into His messengers
    - And the ones He chooses to elevate aren't the ones we may expect
      - They aren't necessarily qualified according to our standards
      - They may even seem to be disqualified according to our standards
      - But God's desire is to call them away from the world He finds them in, and give them a new mission

[John 15:19](#) "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.

- But it's important to recognize that though God selected men who were unqualified, He didn't send men who were untrained
  - At this point in Luke's gospel, these men have no idea what's ahead of them



- All they know at this point is they've been selected to be part of the special inner circle of a really cool rabbi with some impressive healing powers
  - Kinda like a Jewish version of American Idol
- Little do they know that God is going to put them through three years of training with the Son of God so to prepare them for their life of ministry
  - And this life of ministry will include beatings, imprisonment, starvation, humiliation and ultimately martyrdom
  - And they won't graduate knowing everything they needed to know
  - But the Holy Spirit continues to teach and guide them
- So it is for us now
  - God calls those He wants in ministry
  - And those He calls, He equips
  - But early in that process, we won't know where He's taking us
  - Our job is merely to listen to the Word, grow with each new experience and apply ourselves to learning from our mistakes
  - The whole time trusting God to get us where He is taking us
- Now Jesus, having selected the apostles, then proceeds to teach them in unique ways apart from how he generally taught the crowds that followed him
  - The next section, commonly called the Beatitudes (consummate bliss), begins with a transition describing the scene
    - The account in Mark and Matthew differs slightly from the one in Luke
    - In fact, the entire discourse in Luke is considerably shorter than the one provided by Matt
    - This has led to speculation that these are two different discourses,

- but the introductions have strong parallels
- That suggests that Luke simply condensed the account for the sake of his gospel
- Probably the biggest difference centers around location details in the two gospels

[Luke 6:17](#) ¶ Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and *there was* a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon,

[Luke 6:18](#) who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured.

[Luke 6:19](#) And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing *them* all.

- Luke records that Jesus first went up the mountain to select the apostles
  - Then he returns to a level place to teach the huge crowds
  - But Matt records it this way

[Matt. 4:24](#) ¶ The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

[Matt. 4:25](#) Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and *the* Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and *from* beyond the Jordan.

[Matt. 5:1](#) ¶ When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

[Matt. 5:2](#) He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,

- Matt says that it was upon Christ's ascent that began to teach the Beatitudes
  - While Luke says it was upon his descent to a level area
- These two accounts can be harmonized fairly easily, however
  - We know Jesus went up the mountain to pray before selecting the 12
  - By morning he had selected the 12, then he descended to a level place and began teaching and healing the crowds

- But at some point the crowd became too immense and he retreated back up the mountain some distance to get away from the crowd
- It was up on the mountain that he began to teach the apostles
  - It's also likely that some of the crowd followed him up the mountain too
- And it was in this setting, having selected his 12 apostles, the men who form the early church against all odds
  - In a time when his name was growing famous
  - When the Pharisees felt their empire of status and power threatened
  - In this climate mixed with awe and hatred, reverence and spite that Jesus begins to teach his most sublime messages
    - On the difference between trusting in God vs. trusting in self
    - On the difference between demanding justice and giving mercy
    - On the difference between expecting your reward here and awaiting it in eternity
    - On the difference between a faith in works and the works of our faith