JESUS CHOSE THE TWELVE

Luke 6:6-19

Key verse 6:12-13

"One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles:"

Thank God for granting us this new year, 2022. Thank God for helping us to have a direction to receive the power of the Holy Spirit so that we can overcome the work of evil spirits prevalent in our time and be true, faithful and powerful witnesses of Jesus. This year the whole UBF direction is to raise disciples based on Luke 6:12-13. We believe that disciple-raising and the power of the Holy Spirit are to go together in serving the gospel ministry. As we study today’s passage, may we go deeper into the heart of Jesus who chose the Twelve and know the meaning of disciple-raising ministry clearly.

**First, to do good or to do evil (6-11).** Verse 6 says, “On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled.” How can we describe the life of this man with a shriveled right hand? God made us with two hands so we might be able to operate well in life, to lift and move certain things, to work, to cook, to exercise and do sports or to play music instruments, etc. But one hand of this man was shriveled. So his life was very handicapped. While Mark wrote that “a man with a shriveled hand was there” (Mk 3:1), Luke wrote “a man was there whose right hand was shriveled”. Perhaps the difficulty of his life was two-fold with his right hand shriveled rather than his left. His inconvenient and handicapped life was one thing and the view of himself and that of others to see him in the society was quite another. He must have been full of self-consciousness and others’ reproach. This mans was there in the synagogue, undoubtedly expecting for the mercy of God.

Then what was going on there? Verse 7 says, “The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath.” Even in the synagogue, the religious leaders were using this pathetic man as bait to find a way to accuse Jesus as a Sabbath-law violator. They were blind to see Jesus and themselves and this man with the shriveled hand. They were using their two eyes and two hands and their brain, all they had, to catch a clue to accuse Jesus. In a different way, they also were shriveled.

At the watchful eyes of the legalistic Pharisees what did Jesus do? Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Get up and stand in front of everyone.” Jesus knew their hidden evil thinking and exposed it, and at the same time was taking a step to heal this man. This was like a declaration of a spiritual war against the evil power. In doing so, Jesus was risking his own life.

Of course, Jesus could have healed him right away by touching him or by the command of his word. But Jesus said to the man, “Get up and stand in front of everyone.” Jesus said this, not to give him a hard time, but to help to have faith which was necessary for the healing. Jesus was helping him to stand on the side of Jesus, knowing that Jesus was right and was caring for him. Yet, such an act would be scary for the man because of the watchful eyes of the enemies of Jesus. However, Jesus wanted him to have a courageous faith that would not be afraid of the malevolent Pharisees and teachers of the law. And Jesus believed that he would do so. It was because when God made man in his image, he gave man such courage that withstands any adverse circumstances and opposition to rule over and conquer. It is true that anyone can be courageous at the very moment he or she decides to obey Jesus’ command. It is so beautiful to see that this man has the same spirit and was in the same boat as Jesus. He got up and stood there. With faith in Jesus, he did not fear people, but God.

Now Jesus was helping the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. He said to them in verse 9, “I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” It must have been a striking question for them. It was obvious that in their legalistic mind what was lawful on the Sabbath was to keep the Sabbath laws and rules. They must have never thought of the definition of what is lawful on the Sabbath in terms of doing good or evil, saving life or destroying it. Jesus questioned in this way appealing to their conscience, because what they were doing was evil while they were supposed to do good on the Sabbath and because what Jesus was doing was saving life whereas for him not saving life meant destroying it. Doing good is not the same as not doing evil. So Jesus’ definition of what is lawful on the Sabbath was positive. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were cautious and rigid in attempt not to violate the Sabbath laws. In their negative struggle, it turned out that they were doing evil. In Jesus’ teaching, keeping the Sabbath holy involves doing good, of course, as the result of the right relationship with God. It is furthermore saving life, as Jesus was demonstrating.

This world is a battle ground between good and evil, between God and Satan, and between God’s kingdom and Satan’s kingdom. Not saving life is destroying it. It is because not saving life is giving a chance to Satan, whose work is to actively destroy the lives of people.

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were sure that they were keeping the law and so lawful. But at Jesus’ penetrating question they did not answer, for obviously they were not doing good and not saving life. Subsequently they were doing evil and destroying life.

Then Jesus looked around at them all, and then said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ He did so, and his hand was completely restored.” This man must have habitually hidden his shriveled hand behind his back or in his pocket. It would have been very difficult for him to stretch out his shriveled hand. But Jesus commanded this so that he might be completely healed and restored in his both body and spirit. He did so and there was the complete restoration work and the life was saved. At this the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus. It shows that by saving life, Jesus would jeopardize his life. Eventually he would give his life on the cross for the life-saving work of mankind.

According to Luke this event is the very preceding background just before Jesus chose the twelve. Most probably, Jesus wanted to raise spiritual leaders who are willing to risk their lives to do good, that is to save life, specifically one soul.

**Second, Jesus chose the twelve (6:12-19).** Verse 12 says, “One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God.” Here, “one of those days” could mean when the gospel work faced the strong opposition and there was no true spiritual leaders who would risk their lives for the sake of one soul. In such a time, Jesus did not seek a human solution. Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and he spent the night praying to God. We see the emphasis on prayer. We know that Jesus was full of wisdom (2:40,52). But he did not depend on his own wisdom. Rather he prayed to God to find a solution from God. Jesus prayed to God the Father to receive a clear direction from him and obey it. Jesus even spent the whole night praying to God. The praying Jesus is the holy image of him as the Son of God.

What was the result of his prayer? Verse 13 says, “When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.” The expression “when morning came”, showed his whole night prayer. It also indicates that the brightness of morning came after the dark night. We are to know that prayer can change our hearts and human conditions from darkness to light.

After the prayer Jesus called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, who he also designated apostles. Here we can think of several things.

Firstly, Jesus chose among his disciples. In Mark’s gospel it is written, “Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him” (Mk 3:13). In Luke, Jesus chose among his disciples. Disciples were the followers of Jesus. They were learners of Jesus, and would be disciplined in every area of life to become like Jesus. Apostle Paul said to Timothy, his disciple, “You know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings…” At this point though not yet established people, the disciples were eager to learn and eager to receive divine discipline. They would be taught by Jesus intensively and regularly. They would not only learn Jesus’ teaching but also his life. Through life together with Jesus, they would come to know the person Jesus and have an inseparable relationship with him, rooted in love and truth, and this relationship would be the closest one among all their relationships. Again, Jesus chose among those who were humble enough to learn and to be disciplined and discipled.

Today’s universities have long been merely places of knowledge transfer. People go to college to get good jobs and careers. A true teacher and disciple relationship is rare on the campuses. In the last two years of the COVID pandemic, people have become more individualistic and distanced from others. Rather than gathering on campus, students increasingly gather in the so-called metaverse to talk and live. Where is true living? It is life together with Jesus, listening to him and imitating his life.

Secondly, Jesus chose them. Jesus said to his twelve disciples in John 15:16, “You did not choose me, but I chose you…” And Jesus also said in John 6:44, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day.” Jesus’ choosing shows his initiative in God’s sovereignty. In this world, we cannot be sure of anything or anyone, not even ourselves. But we can be assured of God’s sovereign choice. This is what we have been taught in Jude 2, “To those who have been called, who are loved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ” and 1 Thessalonians 1:4, “For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you.” God’s choice is our assurance. There would be many ups and downs in the lives of Jesus’ disciples. But faith in God’s sovereign choice would enable them to overcome one difficulty after another and go deeper in his sovereign will and purpose.

Thirdly, Jesus chose the twelve. Some say that the number twelve is a multiple of the perfect heavenly number three (representing the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit), and the perfect earthly number four (representing north, south, east and west). Figuratively speaking, the number twelve represents the whole world. Here we are reminded of the twelve sons of Jacob who would be the twelve patriarchs of Israel, and the foundation for the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus chose exactly twelve, no more and no less. This indicates that in choosing the twelve, Jesus had in mind the new Israel. When God made the nation Israel through Abraham and the 12 patriarchs, God wanted the nation to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, and thus a blessing for the world. But when they abandoned God’s purpose for them and even forsook the LORD their God and turned to other gods, God was so pained. God’s plan seemed to fail. But that was not the case. Despite their unfaithfulness, God was faithful to his promise, and finally sent his Son Jesus as the Saviour of the world. Now, at the right time, Jesus chose the Twelve in the hope of forming a new Israel for God’s world salvation purpose. Jesus’ choosing the Twelve matches God’s plan of world salvation, and Jesus believed that God’s plan would be accomplished. Jesus had a sense of God’s history and obeyed the will of God. Jesus taught God’s will and plan to his disciples time and again, and asked them to pray for this: “Your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Mt 6:9; Lk 11:2).

Fourthly, Jesus designated them apostles. Apostles is in Greek, *apostolos.*The term derives from the Greek verb “to send” and means “someone sent”, “a messenger”. And in the Bible, “apostle” is a great title given, strictly speaking, only to these twelve disciples of Jesus who would directly experience Jesus on earth. Actually, they would be sent out into the world as witnesses of Jesus’ death and resurrection and assume the messianic ministry after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension. After his resurrection Jesus said to them, “…repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things” (Lk 24:47-48). In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations…” (Mt 28:18-19) and in John’s gospel, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (Jn 20:21). They would be sent out with the authority of Jesus. And because of them the gospel of salvation was spread to the whole world through succeeding generations of disciples. From the beginning of choosing the Twelve, Jesus designated them apostles. This is Jesus’ faith and hope in them. Jesus was sure that they would indeed become apostles.

Now the names of the apostles are written: “Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.” Basically, Luke wrote each one’s name, separating one name from the other by a comma. It signifies that each person is unique before God. And there are three pairs of identical names: Simon, James and Judas. To distinguish the Simons, it is written, “Simon (whom he named Peter)", and "Simon who was called the Zealot". Also, as for Simon, the name Peter, meaning rock, is mentioned--the name Jesus gave him. This reveals Jesus’ hope for him, although he was not yet rock-like in his personality and for the church. He would be the first, the leader of the Twelve. It is interesting that Luke wrote, “Simon who was called the Zealot,” while Matthew and Mark wrote, “Simon the Zealot.” To Luke, Simon was the Zealot in the past, but not anymore. He is now Apostle Simon. In Matthew’s gospel, Matthew wrote, “…Matthew the tax collector”, most importantly [probably] to remember God’s grace that called even a tax collector like him. But Luke just wrote, “Matthew,” indicating that he is no longer a tax collector, but an apostle, Apostle Matthew. And there are two James, so written, “James” and “James son of Alphaeus.” By Mark (15:40) he is also called “James the Less,” which by some is interpreted as meaning “James the younger.” And there are two Judas, recorded, “Judas son of James” and “Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.” To separate the two identical Judas, writing “Judas Iscariot” would have been enough. Yet, there is a painful comment: Luke wrote, “who became a traitor”, whereas Matthew and Mark, “who betrayed him.” According to Luke, it is clear that Judas was not a traitor from the beginning. He became a traitor. We cannot deny Jesus’ choice and hope for him. The issue was that Judas could not bear it. This shows that God’s choosing grace does not cancel human responsibility. We need the assurance of God’s choice, and at the same time we should keep watch over ourselves, that we might bear this tremendous grace.

Jesus chose the Twelve and designated them apostles. When we think about the twelve, they are so different. They were different in their jobs and personalities. There must have been so many difficulties when these twelve different guys lived together. As we studied, Simon was a hard-working man. But he was domineering and had a big mouth. Andrew seemed vague, but had point. He could persuade a boy with five loaves and two fish to offer them to Jesus so that Jesus could feed 5,000 people. John and James were sneaky with hidden ambition. Philip was smart, but his way of thinking was pessimistic. Bartholomew was Nathanael according to John (1:45). Jesus said that he was a true Israelite and gave him a vision of spiritual growth. Interestingly, Matthew and Thomas were written side by side. Matthew was a very selfish man as a tax collector and Thomas was a doubter. Whenever something was missing, Thomas could have been suspicious of Matthew. So it could have been hard for Matthew to bear Thomas' doubt and also for Thomas, Matthew’s selfishness. There might have been many conflicts between them. Yet, perhaps they could grow as close friends. The name Thomas comes right after the name Matthew in both Luke and Mark. In Matthew, however, the name Thomas comes first. Perhaps Matthew recognized that Thomas was better than he. Anyway, they were different. Also, God’s leading for each person would be different. For example, James and John were brothers, and both were very ambitious. However, James was martyred at the time of the early church, while John most probably lived longest and was exiled to the remote island of Patmos (Rev 1:9). They would suffer in different ways, although all would suffer for Christ.

Jesus called and chose various kinds of different people, the Twelve, in the hope that they might learn to live together with different people and be molded in God’s love to be shepherds for the people of the world. Jesus hoped and believed that they would indeed become apostles, ambassadors of Christ Jesus, who could represent the Saviour and Lord Jesus through their messages and lives to the people of the world.

In verses 17-19, “He went down with them and stood on a level place. 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 hm and to be healed of their diseases. Those trouble by evil spirits were cured, and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.” Jesus did not take the Twelve deep into a mountain and pass on knowledge for three years. Instead, he came down to the plain where people lived and many troubles were. There Jesus confronted the practical problems of people and taught his twelve disciples how to serve the needy people. And here Jesus healed all those tried to touch him, while Jesus healed one man with a shriveled hand risking his life in the previous passage. Jesus is the healer and Saviour of one man and of all people of the world.

In this study we learn that we should pray for God’s direction in our lives. May God help each one to accept his calling and choosing very personally. In Jesus’ faith and hope, may we grow as true disciples of Jesus so that we can raise disciples of Jesus one by one. May we be willing to risk our lives for the sake of one soul in the hope of God’s kingdom and will for the whole world.