Mark Lesson 9 (2022)

**JESUS APPOINTS KINGDOM WORKERS**

Mark 3:7-19

Key Verse: 3:14-15

“He appointed the twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.”

According to Mark’s account, Jesus began his messianic ministry by proclaiming God's coming kingdom. *“The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”* (1:15) His message of God’s coming kingdom is the central theme of Mark’s Gospel, and there is no doubt that the primary concern for Jesus’ messianic ministry is God’s coming kingdom. Yet, people could interpret the message of God’s coming kingdom differently, depending on their cultural, religious, and personal life experiences.

As soon as the famous prophet John, who baptized Jesus by the Jordan, was put in prison, Jesus went north all by himself into Galilee. In Galilee, he first found several ordinary fishermen, Simon, Andrew, James, and John, to join his messianic movement by telling them, “Come, follow me, and I will send you out to fish for people.” (1:17) I am not sure if they truly understood what Jesus’ calling purpose was. But they immediately followed him. He also called Levi, a notorious tax collector, to join the group by telling him, “Follow me!”

In Chapters 1 and 2, we learned Jesus’ new teaching of God’s coming kingdom got the attention of many people, not simply because it was new but because the demonstration of his divine power authenticated that his teaching was from God in healing many diseases, including leprosy and paralysis. Yet, the traditional Jewish religious leaders were not happy about it. In 2:1-3:6, we learned the five conflicts between Jesus and Jewish religious leaders in Galilee. Being challenged by Jesus’ new approach, the Jewish leaders hardened their hearts. Their hatred against Jesus reached the point that they began to plot how they might kill him (3:6).

Mark 3:7-6:6 records the second part of Jesus’ Galilean ministry. Being aware of their decision to kill him, Jesus began to pay more attention to his disciples while serving the crowd, teaching and healing them. In today’s passage, 3:7-19, his disciples began to assist their master with minor duties, and Jesus appointed them as kingdom workers for the future. Today’s key verse states that he appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. It applies not only to the Twelve but also to us today. This morning, let’s think about why Jesus appointed the Twelve and what Christ Jesus might want us to do for his kingdom in our situation.

Look at verses 7 and 8. “Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon.” Jesus withdrew because he was aware of the plotting of his enemies to kill him. He took his disciples with him this time and went to the lake. Yet, they could not hide from the crowd. A large group of people followed him. According to verse 8, a large group who came to Jesus included people not just from Galilee but also from all parts of Palestine, including Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan (Deca Polis) and around Tyre and Sidon (Phoenecia) [Map#1]. He was no longer a local evangelist. He had become a national figure and beyond.

Why did these people from all parts of Palestine come to see Jesus? Initially, they came because they heard what Jesus was doing in Galilee, healing the sick miraculously, including the lepers and paralyzed, and driving out demons. Many of them got curious about who Jesus was and wanted to see if what they heard about him was true. We don’t know the exact size of the crowd. Maybe several thousand or tens of thousands? We are not sure. But at least it was far more than Jesus and his disciples could easily handle (Pic#1).

Look at verses 9-10. “Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.” It was the first time Jesus asked his disciples to do something to assist him. He asked them to have a small boat ready for him so that unruly people may not disrupt his services and things could be done in order. Jesus taught stewardship to his disciples by letting them prepare a small boat for him.

We also noticed in the passage that Jesus healed many, which means many sick people came for healing. Yet, we don’t know if Jesus healed all the sick people who came there. We would want to believe so, and it was more than possible. We also notice that many of them tried to touch Jesus by any means, thinking that if they touched Jesus, their disease could be gone. They believed in the magic touch for their healing (pic#2). How desperate they were!

We have so many medications available today. For example, we can take Aspirin or Tylenol if we have headaches. They say that hypertension is a slow killer. I’ve been taking medications for my hypertension for the last two decades, and my blood pressure is under control. Thank the Lord. But if I were to live in Jesus’ time and have high blood pressure, I have no idea how I would’ve survived. I might have suddenly died of a heart attack, not knowing I had hypertension. There were no antibiotics like penicillin, so many suffered from body pains from infection and were susceptible to various illnesses.

We see sick people everywhere. They are ill not just physically but also emotionally and mentally. Back in Jesus’ time, emotionally and mentally ill people were considered demon-possessed. Until recently, we didn’t understand human psychology. So mentally ill people were treated inhumanly, locking them with shackles and beating them to drive out demons. It was a misguided attempt due to ignorance.

It seems that Jesus healed those who were sick physically, emotionally, and mentally. It demonstrates that God’s coming kingdom has to do with the healing of our body and soul. It’s no wonder that the gospel narratives are full of Jesus’ healing stories. Healing is available if we are touched by Jesus. It may not be immediate but gradual and takes a long process.

Look at verses 11 and 12. “Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, ‘You are the Son of God,’ But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him.” Jesus didn’t allow demons to disturb his ministry. They make a lot of noises to distract Jesus’ healing ministry. But Jesus ordered them to be quiet. The fact that Jesus can call them to be silent reveals Jesus’ absolute authority over the power of demons and evil spirits. We must keep in mind that our spiritual battle is not against flesh and blood but against the forces of evil. Yet, we don’t need to be afraid. I mean, we should not allow demons to disturb us. We also need to put our confidence in the authority of Jesus. That’s why Jesus said to his disciples, “It is I. Don’t be afraid.”(Jn. 6:20)

In verses 7-12, Mark described the tremendous need for healing in Palestine, including Judea, Galilee, and surrounding areas. It’s just a snapshot of the world situation. What did Jesus do? In verses 13-19, Jesus appoints the Twelve. It’s a brief description. I wish that there were more. Yet, I see Jesus’ blueprint for his kingdom work throughout generations.

Look at verse 13. “Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.” Knowing the tremendous needs of the people in the world, he went up to a mountainside, probably to have communion with God the Father through prayer. Then he called to him those he wanted. And they came to him. Their names are recorded in verses 16-19. “These are the twelve appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means ‘sons of thunder), Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.”

When we think of Jesus as being the Almighty Son of God, we expect him to do something much bigger than what he did. When we look at these people Jesus had chosen to be the Twelve Apostles, they didn’t look impressive. Four of them were ordinary fishermen, one of them was a tax collector, and others we know not much about except their names. One of them even betrayed his master. None of them were highly educated or held an important position, even in the local government. They were just ordinary and ambitious young men in Israel who wanted the world to be upside down. They were nationalists. Yet, I don’t think Jesus promised them that he would fulfill their human ambition and they would become famous and influential spiritual leaders. No. The fact of the matter is that they remained ordinary until they died while serving people just as their master did. They had to sacrifice their dreams, personal career, and even family. That was everything for them. We don’t know much about them afterward. However, I believe that they fulfilled the divine purpose as God’s kingdom workers in the small corner of the world, precisely the way Jesus wanted.

Verses 14 and 15 describe what Jesus called them for as the chosen Twelve. Read verses 14 and 15. “He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.” Many people speculate that the reason why Jesus gave Simon the name “**Peter**” was to establish him to be the foundation of the Church, which Christ would build on earth. Maybe so. But what Jesus intended for his chosen people was genuine and not political.

Jesus’ primary purpose for his chosen ones was to be with him. The phrase “be with him” is an essential part of discipleship. It’s a relationship. Ever since these twelve decided to follow him, they had spent time with Jesus. They shared their life, eating and going around everywhere together. But their life together is meant to be just in a physical sense. The human Jesus would no longer be with them. “Be with him” has spiritual meaning. In a spiritual sense, to “be with him” means being united, rooted, and built on him (Col. 2:7). In other words, their identity is unique before God, yet, they would find the completeness of themselves in and through Christ Jesus.

It reminds us of John 1:4, which states, “In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind,’ also John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me, you can do nothing.” Human Jesus would not be with his followers physically. But after his resurrection from the dead, he would become the Christ and be with his followers forever and ever. He lives in us through the Spirit, and we live in him now forever. It’s a core of discipleship.

Jesus also called the Twelve so that he would send them out to preach the message of God’s kingdom, which is the grace of forgiveness of sins through repentance and faith in God’s unchanging love. The authority Jesus would give to his apostles is not political or even ecclesiastical authority to lord it over other people. Instead, it is a spiritual power from God’s unconditional love and compassion. It’s a right to use God’s power to genuinely serve suffering people in pain, loneliness, and insecurity until God’s healing comes on them. God’s kingdom is not just a futuristic or geographical one. Christ Jesus is dwelling in us through the Spirit now and forever.

Jesus might not have been interested in establishing a powerful worldwide religious institution. Yet, appointing the ordinary twelve in his time shows that he wants regular folks, like you and me, to do the job left for his kingdom throughout generations until he returns. We are a chosen few, like the Twelve. He picked us one by one not because we were better than others. Despite our shortcomings and limitations, he called us to be with him so that we could be with him. God’s kingdom has to do with healing our bodies and souls. It’s a process of transformation. It all starts when we remain in him and he in us in our day-to-day living.

Wherever we are, what kind of occupations we may have, and what talents we may have, we need to acknowledge that we are God’s kingdom workers. We can be part of this beautiful work of redemption. If we can make a slight difference in the small corner of this world, life by itself is most meaningful and rewarding. May we share the good news of the kingdom of God with our family members, neighbors, coworkers, friends, and beyond, not just by words but by our deeds. May we ask the Lord to fill us with genuine authority from heaven so that we may be his instrument to bring his healing to those who are struggling with pains and illnesses.