Jesus Appoints the Twelve

Mark 3:1-19

Key Verse: 3:14 “He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach.”

Rev. Billy Graham is known as one of the greatest preachers and evangelists in US history. He traveled around the world for the last 70 years and preached the gospel to more than billions of people. When he became old, one reporter asked Rev. Graham if he was given one more life what he would do. “Will you travel around the world to preach the gospel as before?” Rev. Graham answered, “No, I want to raise Jesus’ disciples instead of traveling around.” He expressed the importance of raising Jesus’ disciples in his life. One of St. Louis UBF Church’s prayer topics is raising Jesus’ disciples. Then, why is it important for Rev. Graham and us to raise Jesus’ disciples more than anything else? Today’s message answers this. In a short, Jesus did it. Jesus raised his disciples more than anything else. So, we do it, too.

First, stretch out your hand (1-6) Look at 3:1-2. “***Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath***.” A synagogue is a Jewish local church. People meet there to hear the word from rabbis and enjoy social fellowships. A shriveled hand is a handicap from congenital deformity. A hand does not grow normally. The man must have heard about Jesus who touched the leper, raised a paralytic, and healed all kinds of sicknesses. According to 2:24 some of them are the Pharisees. Pharisees were Jewish religious leaders, who taught Torah, Mishnah, and other Jewish traditions in a synagogue. Once they were respected as teachers of their people, but on Jesus’ day they were rebuked by Jesus as hypocrites. (Mt 23:13-16,17,27,33) In today’s passage they were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if Jesus would heal him on the Sabbath. They wanted to accuse Jesus as a law-breaker if he heals the shriveled handed man on the Sabbath.

How did Jesus see the man and help him? Look at verse 3. “***Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.***” The Pharisees saw the man as bait to accuse Jesus, but Jesus saw him as a lost sheep who needs a shepherd. In Mark 6:34 when Jesus saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. Jesus asked the man to stand in front of people. Why did he ask him to do so? The man with the shriveled hand hid himself from people. He was ashamed of his shriveled hand. He wanted to meet Jesus personally, to be healed secretly, and go home immediately. But Jesus challenged him to stand before people, even the Pharisees who wanted to accuse him with Jesus. The man had a handicap, but was one of Abraham’s descendants. He did not need to hide himself because he is a precious child of God.

Then Jesus asked the Pharisees, “***Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent***. (3) In the previous chapter Jesus taught them that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (2:27) Jesus taught them that it is lawful to do good and to save life on the Sabbath. God is pleased with those who serve God and help the needy and sick people on the Sabbath because God is love and the spirit of the law is love. So the Pharisees became silent because what Jesus said was right. Jesus looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts. (5) And he said to the man, “***Stretch out your hand***.” Jesus asked him to stretch out his shriveled hand. To the man the shriveled hand was the symbol of shame. So, he always hid the hand in his pocket. But Jesus challenged him to stretch out the hand so that all people might see it. By doing so Jesus asked him to live by faith, not by sight. Jesus asked him to overcome his fate by his faith. Jesus helped him to restore his self-esteem and confidence for his life.

By faith the man stretched out his hand. What happened to him? Verse 5 says that **his hand was completely restored**. The shriveled hand became the same as the other. A miracle happened to this man when he obeyed Jesus’ word. Miracles will happen to us when we obey Jesus’ words like this man. Jesus wants us to stretch out our shriveled hand to Jesus. Do you have anything hidden in your heart like a shriveled hand which makes you ashamed, withdrawn, depressed, and dispirited? Stretch it out before Jesus and be healed. In John 4, to the Samaritan woman her husband was her shriveled hand. She had five husbands and she didn’t want people to talk about that. She hid it in the deepest recesses of her heart. But Jesus asked her, “*Go and call your husband*.” Jesus exposed her shriveled hand to be healed. It was painful for her, but Jesus helped her to be free from her sin problem and her soul was thus healed from sin-sickness. Jesus said, “*Stretch out your hand*.” Jesus wants us to stretch out our hand and be healed. Jesus said “*everyone who hears my words will…cross from death to life*”. (Jn 5:24)

Second, crowds who follow a shepherd Jesus (7-12) Look at verses 7-12. “***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. 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. 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.***” The crowd who sought for Jesus kept increasing. From all regions of Judea people came to see Jesus for hearing and healing. Jesus told his disciples to go somewhere away from the crowd. Jesus didn’t avoid the crowd, but wanted to spend time with his disciples. Jesus saw the crowd with the eyes of compassion. This is because they were like harassed and helpless sheep without a shepherd. What did Jesus do after being away from the crowd?

Third, Jesus chose the Twelve. (13-19) Look at verses 13-15. “***Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 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.***” Jesus went up on a mountain to pray. He often went up to a mountain to pray and to have fellowship with God. Before he chose the Twelve Jesus prayed. He asked God to send disciples and believed that they were sent by the Father. In John 17:6 Jesus prayed to God for his disciples, “*I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.*” Jesus called to him those he wanted and they came to him. This verse tells us that (Jesus’) God’s calling belongs to his absolute sovereignty. Jesus called those he wanted. Jesus said to his disciples, “*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit...*” (Jn 15:16) I don’t think that all of you came here by chance or by accident. Of course you chose to come here, but I believe that God sent you here. It is the Lord God who sent you here. You are those God wants. You are all chosen by God among many. Thank God that we all belong to the Lord and that we are his chosen people. Amen!

What was the purpose of choosing the Twelve? Jesus appointed them so that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. Jesus called them to be with him. What does ‘be with him’ mean? To be with him means to know him through life together. If you want to know who a person is, stay with him for three days. You will have an answer. When they lived together with Jesus, they came to know who Jesus was. According to John 1:35-42 Andrew, one of John the Baptist’ disciples, came to Jesus and asked, “*where are you staying?*” Jesus replied, “*Come and you will see*.” Then Andrew stayed with Jesus all day long and returned to Peter saying, “*We have found the Messiah*”

Jesus also called them to preach the good news and drive out demons. Jesus wanted to make them apostles and shepherds for suffering sheep. Jesus’ disciples are shepherds. Shepherds are those who feed sheep and take care of them. Jesus said to Peter in John 21:15, “*Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? Peter answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said “Feed my sheep.*” Jesus repeated the same question and the same answer three times. People repeat to emphasize importance. Jesus called Peter to be a shepherd because people were like sheep without a shepherd. The Pharisees and religious leaders didn’t care about people. They cared only for themselves, their interest, their benefit, and their position, not for God’s sheep. People are suffering under the power of sin. They are wandering here and there because they have no one who guides them, protects them, and provides them. Peter said in his letter to the saints who were scattered around the world, “*Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing..*.” (1 Pe 5:2) Jesus showed us how to be a good shepherd in John 10:11. ‘*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep*.”

How can we shepherd God’s sheep? We take care of people by teaching the word. Shepherds are those who know the truth, teach the truth, and lead sheep to the truth. Jesus is the truth. Shepherds are those who lead sheep to Jesus. We participate in God’s work in many ways and routes. Some volunteer for child daycare. Others visit the homeless and provide food. Still others join praise bands and support with their talents and skills. There are many ways to follow Jesus and many programs to care for God's sheep. Among them, teaching the word of God as a Bible teacher is known as best. This generation needs shepherds who pray for this generation and take care of God’s sheep. Shepherds are spiritual leaders. Someone said that raising one leader is worthier than serving one thousand, sometimes one million. In Exodus God raised one leader Moses who led one million Israelites out of Egypt. This is why Rev. Billy Graham wanted to raise Jesus’ disciples if he lived another life. This is why we pray for raising Jesus’ disciples from Wash U and other colleges in St. Louis.

Who are the Twelve? Verses 16-19 shows us their name. “***These are the twelve he 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***.” Simon, James, John, and Andrew are familiar with us because Jesus called them when they were fishing in chapter 1:16-20. Matthew also appears with the name “Levi”, who was a tax collector. Philip was a Jew who had a Greek name. Bartholomew is known as the same person as Nathanael in John chapter one. Simon the Zealot was a nationalist who opposed the Roman government. Judas Iscariot was also chosen as an evil supporting actor in the movie ‘Jesus.’ The Twelve were chosen from ordinary people. This means that anyone can be chosen as Jesus’ disciples regardless of their race, social position, culture, and so on. Whoever responds to Jesus’ calling, “*Follow me!*”, can be his disciples.

Today many people follow money. They want to follow Bill Gates or Elon Musk. Others want to follow other heroes and superstars in this world. Where are you going? Whom do you follow? I ask you to follow Jesus and be his disciple and a shepherd for this generation. The world is wide and life is short. Let us work for God’s kingdom and for his glory while we are still healthy and young. Amen!