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**“I CHOOSE YOU”**

**Luke 5:1-11, 27-32; 6:12-16**

*“I choose you.”*

○ In the beginning when {Ge 1:27, TNIV} **“God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness’,”** he was saying *“I choose you”* to our species and every individual who would ever bear his image, including you and me.

*“I choose you.”*

○ Two millennia ago when {Jn 1:1, 14} **“The Word [who] was God...became flesh,”** {Php 2:7} **“taking the very nature of a servant... and [becoming] obedient... [to] death on a cross,”** he was saying *“I choose you”* to all humanity and each of us.

*“I choose you.”*

○ When the Holy Spirit formed the Church as a {1 Pe 2:9} **“a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God”** he was saying *“I choose you”* to everyone who would ever say “Yes!” to Jesus, including us.

*“I choose you.”*

□ Luke 5 and 6 describe three episodes of choosing.

■ In 5:1-11 Jesus says to four fishermen, **“from now on you will fish for people.”**

■ In vv 27-32 he says to a tax collector, **“Follow me.”**

■ Then in Luke 6:12-16 he “[chooses] **twelve**” men from among his **“disciples,”** **“whom he also [designates] apostles.”**

✎ The first remarkable thing about these encounters is that *the Messiah does the choosing.*

Simply having disciples is not unusual. Most first century Rabbis have disciples who tag along and absorb their teachings. Any {France} **“good teacher [is] expected to have a group of such ‘followers.’”**

However, it is always the pupil who comes to the teacher and asks permission to follow. Jesus turns that custom upside down: he takes the initiative, draws near, and calls on the individual to follow him.

To Simon Peter, Jesus says *“I choose you.”*

To Simon’s brother Andrew, whom Matthew and Mark name in their parallel accounts, Jesus says, *“I choose you.”*

To James and John, Jesus says *“I choose you.”*

To Levi, Jesus says *“I choose you.”*

To the Twelve, Jesus says *“I choose you.”*

So it is with us. God takes the initiative to pursue and woo us. We are at liberty to say “Yes, I will follow Jesus” or “No, I won’t follow” – but only because he has already said **“Follow me.”**

The Living God does not passively wait for us to come choose him. He actively comes and chooses *us.*

✎ The second remarkable thing about these episodes is *whom the Messiah chooses.*

Most leaders try to get the movers and the shakers on their team. They go after the brightest and the best, the can-do people who are skilled at raising big money and working the system and getting things done.

■ But who does Jesus recruit in verses 1-11?

Simon Peter is a blustery braggart who habitually leaps before he looks, talks before he thinks, and bites off more than he can chew.

His brother Andrew is a quiet, unambitious man who is perfectly content to remain in Peter's shadow.

James and John are also brothers. Pushy, bigoted, power- and glory-hungry, they are so loud and hot-headed Jesus nicknames them the {Mk 3:17} **"Sons of Thunder."**

These fishermen are not rich or poor – just average. They are neither illiterate nor are they well-educated – just average. They are not especially devout or irreligious – just average. And to them Jesus says, *"I choose you."*

■ In verses 27-32 Jesus recruits Levi (we know him better as Matthew). Unlike the others this guy is rich, super rich, filthy rich.

That is just it: Levi is *filthy* rich, because he collects taxes for the Roman Empire. The money he extracts from his neighbors feeds, clothes, and arms the pagan armies who defile the Holy Land and crush every effort to win Jewish freedom. Levi is a traitor.

Levi receives no salary; instead, he is authorized to wring out more than the people owe and pocket the difference. Some publicans extort three, four, or five times the district assessment. Levi is a crook. And Jesus says to him, *"I choose you."*

■ In Luke 6:12-16 Jesus names twelve apostles. He includes the five disciples we have already met, plus seven others:

① Philip is {Greenhough} **"a plodding, accurate, conscientious... man...with no originality,"** a decent fellow with **"little moral imagination."**

② Bartholomew (also named Nathanael) is a snob. The first time he hears of Jesus he scoffs, {Jn 1:46}

**"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"**

③ Thomas is known as "the Doubter." He has trouble taking things on faith.

④ James son of Alphaeus is "James the Obscure." The only thing we know about him is his name.

⑤ Simon the Zealot is prepared not only to die for the Lord, but to kill for him. He would almost rather murder a tax-collector than see him redeemed.

⑥ Judas son of James is also named Thaddeus. The Gospels quotes him once, that's it.

⑦ Judas Iscariot {Jn 12:6} is an embezzler who will betray Jesus to death.

The few of these guys who stand out do so mainly for their failures. And Jesus says to them, *"I choose you."*

○ So it is with us. The apostle Paul might as well have been talking to us when he wrote, {1 Co 1:26-29, TNIV}

**think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things...to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things ... and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.**

Thank God he chooses people like us!

✎ That *Christ does the choosing* is remarkable. So is *whom he chooses*. The third remarkable thing about these episodes is *the mission to which he calls them*.

¶ In his parallel account Mark adds some vital details. Mark 3:14-15: Jesus “[designates] **them apostles – that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons.**”

☆ Jesus chooses the Twelve “**that they might be with him.**” That is presence.

■ {5:8} It is because they are with Jesus that the fishermen see who he is, Peter is moved to repentance as he says “**Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!**” and all four leave their former lives behind in order to follow him.

It is because Levis is with Jesus that he leaves his tax booth and his corrupt and predatory way of life “**and [follows] him.**”

Presence is listed first because Jesus is at the center. Being with him is fundamental. Move him off to the side and nothing we do or have is of eternal value.

Until his Second Coming we will not be with the Lord Jesus in the flesh. Yet we can be with him in other ways, through the Holy Spirit and through prayer, worship, and engagement with his Word. These are not legalistic obligations we are compelled to check off the to-do list; they are life-giving opportunities to be with Jesus.

☆ Jesus chooses the Twelve “**that he might send them out to preach.**” That is proclamation.

○ Their message is the Good News of the kingdom: that it has been established in Christ Jesus; that he became human, lived among us, died, rose, ascended, and will return again; that his kingdom is {Lk 4:18-19} “**good news to the poor...freedom for the prisoners... recovery of sight for the blind... release [for] the oppressed,**” and the outpouring of “**the Lord’s favor**”; and that by his undeserved mercy and kindness we can be reconciled to God and live with him forever in his kingdom.

This is our message, too. We proclaim it non-verbally with deeds of  $\alpha\gamma\alpha\pi\epsilon$  love, justice and peace; and of course with preaching, teaching, and words of witness.

☆ Jesus chooses the Twelve “**to have authority to drive out demons.**” That is purification.

{Eph 6:14-18} Demons are real entities that are hell-bent on desecrating the holy, degrading the precious, and uglifying the beautiful. They defile the souls and minds of their human victims and we, like the apostles, are called to expel them and clean up after them. Our spiritual weapons are “**truth... righteousness... the gospel of peace... faith... salvation...the word of God...and [prayer].**”

But that is not the full extent of this ministry. Demons are not the only source of contamination.

There is also human sin. We are sullied by the sins we commit, and sometimes by the sins committed against us, above all by sexual sins, drug abuse, hatred and personal violence.

○ {Eph 4:22-24; Mt 28:19} In this regard, half of our mission is to confess our sin, receive God’s mercy, put **“off [our] old self, which is being corrupted”** and **“be made new in the attitude of [our] minds”** as we **“put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”** The other half is to **“go and make disciples”** who do the same.

○ {Eph 6:12} And there are impersonal systems that rot our communities from the inside out when they are put in service to pride, greed, bigotry, and oppression. Systems like politics, government, economics, the entertainment industry, our schools, the scientific industry, the medical complex, law enforcement, the military, and organized religion – forces which the apostle Paul calls, **“the powers of this dark world.”**

☑ {M Dawn} Our mission of purification includes **“submitting to”** these powers when appropriate, **“praying for”** them, bearing witness to and against them by **“preaching Christ crucified,”** helping transform them by means that honor God and emulate the example of Jesus, helping people who have been neglected or victimized by them, and **“holding fast to [God’s] promises in spite of”** them.

Like the apostles we have been given **“authority to drive out demons”** and other sources of impurity. It is part and parcel of our Gospel mission.

*“I choose you.”* That is what the Son of God said to the Twelve, and that is what he is saying to you and me: I choose you to be with me; I choose you to proclaim the

Good News of the Kingdom; I choose you to purify the contaminated. *“I choose you.”*

We are free to say “No!” and thus choose *against* him.

We are free to say “Yes!” thereby choosing *for* him.

Which will it be?