

Twelve Ordinary Men

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 29 January 2023

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the Gospel according to Luke, Luke chapter 6, page 1038, if you're using the Pew Bible, and we'll read again at verse 12.

Luke chapter 6, reading at verse 12. In these days he went out to the mountain, that is Jesus. He went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named Apostles, Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip and Bartholomew, and Matthew and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor, and so on.

I don't know if you're aware, but as a congregation, we're part of what's called the church development track.

The church development track, it's something that was set up a number of years ago by our denomination to encourage and enable ministers in the work of the gospel, and so that they too will encourage and enable their congregations in the work of the gospel.

[1 : 34] And I'm thankful, and I've thoroughly enjoyed being part of the church development track over the past couple of years. But a couple of weeks ago, ten of us, we met in Inverness to listen to a seminar by Ian McGregor.

Ian McGregor is the son of Roy McGregor, the multi-million pound businessman who owns Global Energy, and also, of course, the chairman of Ross County Football Club.

But Roy McGregor's son, Ian, he's also a businessman who owns a company called Envoy, which is a very interesting company named, boys and girls, because, as you know, an envoy is a messenger sent out with a message.

So an envoy is a messenger sent out with a message. And the message of the envoy group is that correct business management is not based upon a workforce serving the man at the top, but rather the man at the top serving his workforce by encouraging and enabling them to possess a vision, the vision of the business, and put the needs of others in the business first.

It's what you would call a servant leadership model. It's a servant leadership model. And what was really fascinating about this business talk from Ian McGregor is that Ian McGregor's servant leadership model, it was all based upon the example of Jesus and his 12 disciples.

[3 : 06] And that's because, like his father, Roy McGregor, Ian McGregor is a Christian, and his entire business has been built with the ethos of servant leadership.

It's all based upon the example of Jesus and his 12 disciples. And so what Ian McGregor told us that he would do is he would take a small business, and he would take them and train them for two to three months using this servant leadership model in order to grow their business.

And Ian McGregor was telling us that he teaches and trains all sorts of people with all sorts of backgrounds from all sorts of religions, and he teaches and trains them using this servant leadership model.

And then at the end of their training, he explains to them where he learned this model and why he uses it. That he learned the servant leadership model from the example of Jesus, and he uses it because he's a Christian.

And he believes it works because in business terms, you could say that Jesus is the most successful businessman that ever lived. Because his business model, if you can excuse the phrase, his business model began with 12 ordinary men from a Galilean fishing village in Israel, and it grew.

[4 : 25] The business grew, we're told, from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria. And it now covers the uttermost parts of the earth.

It's a worldwide and world-renowned business with envoys, messengers all over the world. But of course, as you know, the church is not a business.

It's the embassy of heaven. But from that embassy, envoys are sent out, messengers are sent out with the gospel to turn the world upside down.

And over the next few weeks, I want us to think about who were the first envoys of this gospel message? Who were the first messengers? Who were these 12 disciples of Jesus?

Because when Jesus began to build his kingdom, he began by implementing this servant leadership model. And he did so when he took 12 ordinary men.

[5 : 23] And these 12 ordinary men were chosen to serve, called to serve, and commissioned to serve. These 12 ordinary men were chosen, called, and commissioned to serve.

And there are three headings this evening. Chosen, called, and commissioned to serve. So first of all, chosen to serve. Chosen to serve. We see that in verse 13.

When day came, Jesus called his disciples and chose from them 12, whom he named apostles.

Now, if you were to recruit a team that would turn the world upside down and alter the course of human history, you would probably want to choose the best and the brightest, the smartest and the sharpest, the clearest and the cleverest.

You'd want to choose the most educated, the most equipped, the most eloquent, the most encouraging, and the most engaging people you could possibly find. But when you finally recruit your team that's going to turn the world upside down and alter human history, there's one thing you would never do.

[6 : 36] And that's tell them that after three years of training your team, your servant leader will be put to death in order to advance your cause. And yet, as you know, you know the story of the gospel.

That's what happened with Jesus and his 12 disciples. Jesus recruited these 12 disciples to teach and train them for three years. But at the end of it all, they deserted him and he was put to death. And looking at it from an outsider's perspective, you'd never think that team Jesus would turn the world upside down and alter the course of human history. But it did.

Team Jesus turned the world upside down and altered the course of human history. You know, in his commentary, the American pastor, John MacArthur, he writes this.

He says, My friend, when Jesus chose his disciples, he chose 12 ordinary men.

[7 : 46] And that's what's remarkable.

Because, you know, you look at this list. Have you ever considered who Jesus didn't choose to be part of his disciples? He didn't choose powerful people. He didn't choose those who were rich and those who were religious.

He didn't find Pharisees. He didn't recruit rabbis. He didn't select scholarly scribes. Instead, Jesus, as we read here, he chose 12 ordinary, everyday, run-of-the-mill men.

And he chose them to turn the world upside down and alter the course of human history. And, you know, that's what makes these men special. That's what makes them worth studying together.

That's why we're beginning a study together on the 12 disciples. Of course, we're familiar with the 12 disciples of Jesus. We've grown up hearing about them. We've learned about their characters and their conduct and their conversations.

[8 : 51] We're familiar with them, but we're also fascinated by them. Because what we often discover is that they're just like us. Or they're just like other people we know.

They're ordinary men, which makes them relevant and real to us. It makes them approachable and applicable to our lives. It makes them so applicable that we can understand their circumstances and their situations.

We can understand even their faults and their failings. Or their tears and their triumphs. We can understand even their doubts and their denials. They're all helpful reminders and reassurances that the 12 disciples of Jesus were just 12 ordinary men.

12 ordinary men. That's why it's good for us to get to know them. Because they're just like us. Just like us. They were 12 ordinary men who were chosen not for their expertise in evangelism.

Or their prowess in planting churches. Or their organization and auditory skills. Or even their theological thinking. No, the truth is, they were actually the complete opposite.

[10:04] They had no theological education. They had no expertise in evangelism. They didn't know how to establish a church, let alone the church of King Jesus.

In fact, for the most part, these 12 men, they were confused about the message. They were contradictory in the mission. And they were completely clouded in their mindset.

As to what Jesus was saying all the time. More than that, they were a completely mixed bag of men. They were all so different. So diverse.

So dissimilar. They completely spanned the spectrum of society. At one end of the spectrum, you had this man, Simon. A former Jewish zealot.

He was probably an ex-terrorist. Who was determined to overthrow Roman rule. Then at the other end of the spectrum, there was this tax collector called Matthew. He was a tax collector who worked for the Roman government.

[11:03] But all the Jews viewed him as a traitor and a turncoat. So you have these two extremes. And then somewhere in between, you have these four fishermen. Maybe possibly seven fishermen.

Who were all from the region of Galilee. They were all fishing around the Sea of Galilee. And there were others in this crowd who were possibly tradesmen. But we don't know.

And yet Jesus chose these 12 ordinary men. Who were just like us. They were just like us. And he chose them.

And he used them. To turn the world upside down. And alter the course of human history. It's no wonder they're worth studying together. But you know what I find so humbling.

Is that when Jesus chose these 12 ordinary men. He knew everything about them. They didn't have to give a CV to Jesus. He knew them.

[12:06] And he knew them with all their faults. All their flaws. All their failings. All their foibles. He knew them privately. He knew them personally.

Because he knew them as their creator. He knew them. And yet he chose them. And Jesus reminded his disciples of this in John 15. He said to the disciples.

Greater love hath no man than this. Than a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends. If you do whatsoever I command you. And then Jesus went on to say. You did not choose me. But I chose you.

And appointed you. That you should go and bear fruit. You did not choose me. But I chose you. And appointed you to go and bear fruit.

But you know what I love. I love what Paul wrote. When he wrote to the church in Corinth. He reminded them that the church isn't made up of special. Or sacred.

[13:05] Or saintly people. Because we're all just ordinary people. Living ordinary lives. Chosen and called to serve an extraordinary savior. Savior. And you remember what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

He says consider your calling. As Christians. Consider your calling. Not many of you are wise according to worldly standards. Not many were powerful.

Not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world. To shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world. To shame the strong.

God chose what is low and despised in the world. Even things that are not. Even things that are. People who seem that they are nothing. To bring to nothing.

Things that are. So that no one will boast before God. As it is written says Paul. Let the one who boasts. Boast in the Lord.

[14:04] Let the one who boasts. Boast in the Lord. And you know that's what it's all about. Jesus chose these 12 ordinary men. To turn the world upside down. So that God would get all the glory.

That's what it was all about. That God would get all the glory. And it's the same for you and for me. He chooses us. And he uses us. So that he will get all the glory.

That is man's chief end. To glorify God. And to enjoy him. Forever. So they were chosen to serve. But they were not only chosen to serve.

They were called to serve. Which is what we see secondly. Called to serve. So chosen to serve. And called to serve. Called to serve. Look at again at verse 13.

When day came. Jesus called his disciples. And chose them from the 12. Chose from them 12. Whom he named apostles. Simon whom he named Peter.

[15:04] And Andrew his brother. And James and John. And Philip and Bartholomew. And Matthew and Thomas. And James the son of Alphaeus. And Simon who was called the Zealot.

And Judas the son of James. And Judas Iscariot. Who became a traitor. When Jesus chose these 12 ordinary men.

To serve alongside him. He called them to serve. And he called them to serve. With the same or the similar. A similar phrase each time.

Follow me. Follow me. Do you remember when Jesus passed by Matthew. Sitting at his tax collector's booth.

Jesus only said two words to him. Follow me. And immediately we're told. Matthew got up. He left his tax collector's booth. And he followed Jesus. The same was true of Andrew and Peter.

[16:02] And James and John. As fishermen. They were at the shore of the Sea of Galilee. They were mending their nets. But Jesus passed by. And Jesus said to them. Follow me. And I will make you fishers of men.

And immediately we're told. They left their nets. And they followed Jesus. So that's the call. The call to serve. Follow me. But of course like many of us.

There were others who were called to serve. And they were hesitant. They held back for a moment. We don't know who it was. We're not told who it was.

But when Jesus said to another one of the disciples. When he said, follow me. This disciple responded and said to Jesus. Lord, let me first go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him.

Let the dead bury the dead. You go and preach the kingdom of God. Another said. When Jesus said to this other disciple.

[17:00] Follow me. He said to Jesus. I will follow you Lord. But let me first say farewell to those at my home. And Jesus said to him. No man having put his hand to the plow.

And turning back. Is fit for the kingdom of God. Follow me. Follow me. It's a call to serve. It's a call to put Jesus first.

It's a call to make Jesus first and foremost in our lives. That's why Jesus described the call of discipleship. When he said. Whosoever will come after me.

Let him deny himself. Take up his cross. And follow me. Whosoever will come after me. Let him deny himself. Take up his cross. And follow me.

And so my friend. And following Jesus. It involves denying self. It involves self-denial. It involves making Jesus primary. It involves making Jesus number one.

[18:01] It involves this call to serve. A call to discipleship. Because to be a disciple of Jesus. Is to be a learner. It's not about being good enough.

It's not about knowing enough. Because a disciple is a learner. A disciple is a learner. That's what the word. Boys and girls. That's what the word disciple means.

It means learner. It means. The word disciple means learner. And that's what this call to serve is. It's a call of discipleship.

It's a call to learn. And we see that with these 12 ordinary men. Because when Jesus called them to serve. He taught them. He trained them for three years as his disciples.

And as he taught them. You read it in the gospels. He taught them how to understand the Bible. But also how to live out the Bible. He taught them how to pray. He taught them how to preach.

[19:00] He taught them how to give. And he taught them how to forgive. He taught them how to love. And how to look after one another. He taught them how to speak. And how to share. He taught them how to care.

And how to show compassion. Jesus taught his disciples. He disciplined his disciples. He taught them and trained them. He equipped them and encouraged them and enabled them to continue the work of the gospel after he had gone.

But the thing is, and this is something we should never forget, every disciple, every follower of Jesus is a disciple. Every follower of Jesus is a disciple.

Where we all have our L plates on. You know, sometimes I think we should all buy an L plate and stick it on. Because we are all learners. We're all learning.

I'm learning. Everything I tell you on a Sunday morning and Sunday evening, I have learned in that week preparing for Sunday. So I'm a learner. You're a learner.

[20:05] We're all learning together. And we'll keep learning together until we reach graduation in glory. But in the meantime, as disciples, we're learning and growing and serving our Savior together as his flock.

Do I know what Jesus said about his flock? He said, My sheep, my sheep hear my voice. And I know them. And they follow me. They follow me.

And we follow him because we've heard this call to serve. This call to serve. And you know, sometimes we try and separate the call to salvation and the call to service.

We try and separate them. But you know, in many ways, we can't actually separate them. Because we're saved to serve. We are all saved to serve.

We're not saved to be stationary saints that are, as some describe, saved, stuck, and satisfied. No, we're saved to serve.

[21 : 11] We're saved to serve. So the question is, have you heard the call to serve Jesus? Have you heard the call to come to Christ? Have you heard the call to, where Jesus says to you clearly, follow me?

Have you heard the call to serve Jesus? And I say that because there were many in Jesus' day who heard that call to serve. There were many in Jesus' day who heard Jesus saying, follow me.

But for many of them, it was just an outward call where they heard the voice of the good shepherd, but they didn't respond wholeheartedly.

We see that in John chapter 6, after Jesus had fed the 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. There were multitudes who came to Jesus, and he explained to them that he is the true bread that came down from heaven.

Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. Whosoever believes in me shall not hunger, and whosoever comes to me shall never thirst. But after a while of listening to Jesus, and this call to serve, some of the disciples, or some of those who were in the hearing, they said, oh, this is a hard saying.

[22 : 29] Who can hear it? This is a hard saying. Who can hear it? And with that many of them, they turned back, and they followed Jesus no longer. And you remember, at the end of John chapter 6, if you don't know the passage, read it tonight.

Jesus turned to these 12 ordinary men, and he asked them, after this crowd leaving, he said to them, will you also go away? Will you also go away?

And then you have Peter. We'll hopefully look at him next week. Peter hadn't just heard the outward call to follow Jesus. Peter had heard that inner effectual call to follow Jesus, which is why he says to Jesus, Lord, to whom shall we go?

You have the words of eternal life, and we know and believe that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And as you know, the thing about Peter, we'll touch on it more next week, he was wholehearted in this commitment to Christ.

He was wholehearted because when Peter started following Jesus, he didn't want to stop following Jesus. Even when Jesus spoke about his death, Peter was asking Jesus, Lord, where are you going?

[23 : 44] Where are you going? And Jesus says to him, where I am going, you cannot follow me now, but you will follow me afterward. And with frustration, Peter says, Lord, why can I not follow you now?

I will lay down my life for you. And as you know, Peter did. Peter did lay down his life for Jesus. He was martyred for being a follower of Jesus.

He was crucified because Peter knew that this inward effectual call upon his life, it was not just a call to salvation, it was more than that.

It was a call to serve because we're saved to serve. It was a call to discipleship. It was a call to learn. It was a call to die to sin and die to self. It was a call to deny self.

Take up your cross and follow Jesus. You know, my friend, have you heard that call? Do you know that call in your life? Have you lost sight of that call in your life?

[24 : 45] Because every disciple of Jesus has been called to serve. And these 12 ordinary men, they were chosen to serve. They were called to serve and they were commissioned to serve.

These 12 ordinary men were chosen to serve, called to serve and commissioned to serve, which is what we see lastly. Commissioned to serve.

Commissioned to serve. Look at verse 13 again. When day came, Jesus called his disciples and chose from them 12, whom he named apostles.

So after Jesus had chosen and called these 12 ordinary men to be his disciples, as we see at the end of Matthew's gospel, Matthew chapter 28, Jesus commissions them.

He commissions them to go out into all the world and do what? Make more disciples, more learners, more servants of the Savior. That's why we call these 12 ordinary men, as Jesus called them, he named them apostles.

[25 : 59] They were the sent ones. That's what the word apostle means. Boys and girls, that's what the word apostle means. It means sent one. It means sent one. And these 12 ordinary men, they were chosen, called, and commissioned by our risen Savior.

They were commissioned by Jesus to be apostles. Now, although Paul wasn't one of the 12 listed here, as you know, he was an apostle.

And Paul was an apostle because he was chosen, called, and commissioned by the risen Jesus.

He was chosen, called, and commissioned by Jesus, as you know, on the road to Damascus.

And all these apostles, they were chosen, called, and commissioned. They were sent out, sent out to serve their Savior. They were sent to turn the world upside down and alter the course of human history with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And they did. They did, of course, not by their own strength, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. As Zechariah said, it's not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord.

[27 : 13] You know, my friend, the disciples of Jesus, they were just ordinary men. And I hope we'll see that in our study. They're just ordinary men who were chosen, called, and commissioned to serve their extraordinary Savior.

But as you know, the great commission didn't end with them. It was passed on. Just like as we saw on Wednesday evening with the revelation of John. It was passed down.

It was handed over from one person to the next. Passed down. The great commission has been passed down. It hasn't changed. Over 2,000 years may have passed. But still, as ordinary men and women, we're still being chosen and called and commissioned to go and make disciples of all nations.

And you know, we might tremble at the all nations bit. But as ordinary men and women, we are still being chosen, called, and commissioned to go and make disciples in Barvis.

Right here, on our own doorstep, we are chosen, called, and commissioned to go and make disciples here in Barvis. I want to conclude this evening with another quote from John MacArthur's commentary.

[28 : 33] He says, the twelve were like the rest of us. They were selected from the unworthy and the unqualified. As Christians, he says, we become discouraged and disheartened and think that we're nobodies.

But God's favorite instruments are nobodies so that he will receive all the glory so that he will receive all the glory.

It reminds me of that song by the Christian band Casting Crowns. I don't know if you've heard the song. It's called, Nobody. Nobody. But that should be our life song as disciples of Jesus.

The lyrics are, I'm just a nobody trying to tell everybody all about somebody who saved my soul. That's what I am.

That's what you are. I'm just a nobody trying to tell everybody here in Barvis or in my workplace or in my school trying to tell everybody all about somebody.

[29 : 55] This somebody called Jesus who saved my soul. God's favorite instruments are nobodies so that he will receive all the glory.

Well, may he receive all the glory. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. Oh Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee this evening for reminding us that the Lord, one who is able to use us, that we often feel like nobodies.

We feel ordinary. There's nothing special about us. And yet we bless and praise Thee tonight for reminding us through the disciples that the Lord, the God who is able to do in us and for us exceedingly, abundantly above all, more than we could ask or even think.

Oh Lord, that Thou wouldst use us, make us willing to serve, that we would be reminded that we have been chosen to serve and called to serve and even commissioned to serve a wonderful Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bless us, Lord, as we begin our study. We pray that in learning we would be taught in order that we might teach others and Lord, that we might learn more about ourselves but more importantly, more about our Savior, a Savior who loved us and gave himself for us.

[31 : 22] Bless us, we pray. Go before us, take away our iniquity and receive us graciously for Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening.

We're going to sing in Psalm 32. Psalm 32 in the Scottish Psalter, page 244. Psalm 32.

We're singing from verse 8 down to the end of the psalm. Psalm 32. Psalm 32. Psalm 32. Psalm 32. Psalm 32. Psalm 32. Psalm 32. Psalm 32. But before we sing, some questions.

I know you're all delighted, aren't you? Delighted, Kate. I can see the smile on your face. Okay, question one. What is an envoy? Messenger.

Well done. By the way, you all get a blackjack on the way out, okay? No. They don't want one.

Okay, what does the word disciple mean? Lerner.

[32 : 25] Yeah, learner. Well, you're a follower too, but you're a learner. So we all need what plates? What do you call that? What's... Capital of learner is L plates, yeah?

Okay, what does the word apostle mean? Sent one. Well done. Good job. So what is an envoy? It's a messenger. What does the word disciple mean?

Lerner. L plates. What does the word apostle mean? Means sent one. And so the question we all have to ask is, are we disciples of Jesus?

Are we followers of Jesus? Okay, Psalm 32, verse 8. Psalm 32, verse 8. As I mentioned, all of our Psalms this evening, they focus upon the theme of teaching or being taught.

Our first Psalm, Psalm 25, David prayed, show me thy ways, O Lord, thy path, so teach thou me. In Psalm 86, David prayed again, teach me thy way and in thy truth.

[33 : 27] O Lord, then walk will I, unite my heart, that I thy name may fear continually. And then Psalm 32, verse 11. You know, it's this wonderful promise from the Lord where he says, I will instruct thee and thee teach the way that thou shalt go and with mine eye upon thee set I will direction show.

Verse 9. Then be not like the horse or mule which do not understand, whose mouth, lest they come near to thee, a bridle must command.

So we're not to be stubborn or to be willing. We're to have a spirit, a teachable spirit where we're willing to learn and be taught of the Lord.

So Psalm 32, verse 8, we're singing down to the end of the psalm. Let's stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise. Amen. I will instruct thee and with thee teach the way that thou shalt go and when my night upon thee set I will direction show then be it not like the horse or mule which do not understand, whose mother's name come near to thee, how bright your hearts come on.

Unto the one that wicked is his sorrow shall come on.

[35 : 49] but heaven and the rest can live in the Lord where he shall come the sun.

Ye righteous in the Lord be glad in heaven do thee rejoice on ye the bright heart in heart for joy with a pure voice.

the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.