

# Message Transcript

FROM CROWD TO CALLED | THE KINGDOM BREAKS IN  
AARON BROCKETT | FEBRUARY 28 & MARCH 1, 2026

Hey, it's good to be with everyone today across all of our locations and any of you joining us online. If you have a Bible, and I hope you brought one, would you please meet me in Mark, chapter 3. That's where we are going to be together today.

And if this is your first time to be with us, let me just let you know that we are spending the bulk of this year taking our time walking through one of the most fast-paced, action packed accounts of Jesus life and ministry—the gospel of Mark.

If you have a short attention span, Mark is the gospel for you. He just cares about the facts. I had a professor through Bible College who said, "Reading Mark's gospel is like listening to a detective on a crime scene interviewing the eyewitnesses. Just the facts, mam. Just the facts." And so he's moving through this really, really quickly.

And we are dividing up the series into six or seven parts. The whole entire series is called The Urgent Kingdom and Part 1, we'll actually finish up next weekend, is The Kingdom Breaks In. But Part 2 is going to start March 14 and 15, and that's The Kingdom in Word and Power. So, that all begins next weekend.

And then we've got three short weekends after that until Easter, that's hard to believe. I kind of feel like we just got done with Christmas. And Easter weekend is coming up. I want to ask you to do a few things, those of you who make this your home church.

## **Pray for and invite "your one"**

Number 1: Can I just ask you right now, today, sometime this afternoon, write down a name of your one more. Maybe it's someone who you are related to. A family member, a friend, a co-worker—somebody who you would go, "Man, it would take a miracle to get them here." Write that name down. And I want you to begin praying over them that the Holy Spirit would hunt them down and then would let you know, at the right moment, when the invitation could be to invite them.



I want to give you a little tip on how to invite. Don't just say, "Would you like to go to an Easter service?" Say this, "Would you like to go to an Easter service and sit with me?" And that will make all of the difference.

### **Attend a non-prime hour**

The second thing I want you to do, I want to ask you, those of you who are part of our home church, attend, on Easter weekend, a non-prime hour. Now, if you are going, "What is a prime hour?" It's the one you are in right now. Alright. So, if this is your home church the 9 and 11 o'clock hours are going to be the fullest. It's going to be when more guests are going to come.

Would you please clear the way and empty your seat for a guest to have your seat? So, you can attend an earlier service, maybe a Saturday service. We're going to add more services that weekend. You can go online and find out when those services will be.

### **Serve as a Difference Maker**

The third thing is would you please serve as a Difference Maker at an hour that you do not attend? Guys, this is one of the biggest weekends of the year. We will expect somewhere around 25,000 people to be here. I'm going to offer a clear gospel presentation and then invite people to be baptized.

Lives change every year at Easter. You can be a part of it if you do those three things. Alright? You in? Nice, six of you down front are in. Awesome. That's awesome.

Hey, Mark, chapter 3, our passage is verses 7 to 19. What I want you to know about where we are at is, that at this point in Jesus' life and ministry, He's becoming more and more well-known. So, with that comes lots of friends and fans. Also, Jesus is making more enemies than He has ever had before. People are already beginning to talk about and make plans for how to kill and get rid of Him and we're not even out of chapter 3.

So, as we jump into verse 7, look with me at your Bible. It says:  
"Jesus withdrew," so circle that word, "with his disciples to the lake,"

How many lake people in the room? How many of you are looking forward to the weather getting warmer so that you can go to the lake. Right? Not as many at the 11:15. I thought this would be a lake crowd. Jesus was always going to the lake, man, with His disciples.



"...and a large crowd from Galilee followed. When they heard about," underline this "all he was doing,

What I want you to see is that word is getting out about Jesus. People are talking. His reputation is spreading quickly. And what was spreading about His reputation was all that He was doing. And I want to point this out because it shows us that Jesus wasn't just about having a quiet time. Now, He did do that. We've already read about that in Mark. He went away 40 days and 40 nights with God before He ever started His ministry.

Pastor Ryan did a great job last week unpacking for us the concept of a Sabbath, which shows us that He didn't need a Sabbath, He was modeling it for us.

So, Jesus does slip away. He was retreating from crowds. But He was also a man of action. And I think that is really important to point out. We've got to keep those things in balance.

I don't know how many of you are like me, that whenever I hear a really good sermon or podcast or a book or some sort of content, I have a tendency to maybe overlook the application that I need and I immediately start thinking about other people who need the application. Any of you ever do that? "Oh, man. This is a really good sermon. I'm going to pass this on to my neighbors. They really need to hear this."

Well, what is the message God needs you to hear? And I would say, with this, it's that Jesus Sabbath[ed] and He got to work. Jesus was a contemplative who also wore work boots. Now, I just need to throw that out there, that you need to apply whatever it is you need to apply from that and don't overlook what you need to receive.

Here's what I mean. Some of you are work aholic achievers. You get more done by noon than most people get done in a whole day. But as a result of that, you are burning the candle at both ends, your relationships aren't all that great. Maybe your marriage is suffering and you aren't spending time with your kids. You work, work, work, work, work to accomplish, accomplish, accomplish, accomplish and you need to slow down and take a Sabbath. And you need to read books with titles like Ruthlessly Eliminating Hurt.

And then others of you, you need to put the book down and go accomplish something. Right? You need to work. If you are under the age of 25, generally speaking, you don't need a Sabbath yet, you need to do something first. Alright? Three of you got that. Others of you are offended. Don't email me. I don't care.



So, in verse 8 it says:

"...many people came to him,"

It started in Galilee but then things went regional for the first time in Jesus' ministry. Mark says:

"from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon." (NIV)

We read that and we're like, "Oh, well those are just names." Well, here's the map to kind of help you visualize some of this, if you are a visual learner. That little red dot is where Jesus is, on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. And Mark says, "I just want you to know, regionally, here's where all of the people are coming from." And you look all the way down south like Idumea, which is a long way away.

We take this for granted because we live in a world now where we can hop on a plane and be on the other side of the world just like that. But in the first century, you are traveling by foot, or by camel, or by donkey. They didn't have direct flights to Galilee. It would have been a big deal for you to go out of your way to go and to be around Jesus.

The primary point is that Jesus was drawing people to Himself, both then and today. And what was drawing people to Jesus—three things: There was His power, and there was His presence, and His words. And what He was doing then, He's still doing today. He draws people by His power, His presence, and His words.

I'm reminded of something Jesus said in John, chapter 12. He said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all people unto Me." And I love that visual because, as a preacher, it takes the pressure off. And as a follower of Jesus, it should take the pressure off of you.

Statistically speaking, most of us, including pastors, are a little bit intimidated to share our faith with others because we don't want to be rejected, we don't want to be mocked, we're afraid of looking like a fool, we don't know if we have enough answers to people's questions, and we don't think we know enough.

And here Jesus says, "Hey, take the pressure off. Just lift Me up. I'm the One who does the drawing. It's not your convincing, it's not your answers, it's not your intellect. Would you just make sure that people get a clear view of Me, My work, My power, My presence? Would you clear the way so that way people can have an encounter with me?"



And then in verse 9 it says:

“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.” (NIV)

Now, verse 9, just make note of this, that is the first recorded command of Jesus to His disciples after the invitation He gave them to follow after Him. So, the very first command that Jesus gives is, “Hey, could you guys go get a small boat?” Doesn’t sound very spiritual, does it? There is kind of a very practical reason—two practical reasons, as near as we can tell.

One: Mark tells us that the crowds were crowding around Jesus and He’s needing a little bit of space.

Now, if any of you have ever been to the north side of the Sea of Galilee, or if you’ve seen pictures, it’s beautiful. It’s a freshwater lake. And as soon as the shoreline hits, it immediately goes uphill. It’s kind of like a reverse amphitheater. So, there would have been crowds of people standing on the hillside. Jesus’ back is to the water. “Hey, could you guys get a small boat? I need a little space. I’m going to get in the boat and I’m going actually go offshore with it where I can have some space.”

And then a dual purpose: Whenever He would begin to teach, they didn’t have amplification systems like we’ve got right now. He would use the water as the amplification of His voice up the hillside so people could hear. It’s a very practical reason.

So, Jesus said, “Hey could you guys go and get Me a small boat?” Now, listen. Here’s what I love:

### **Jesus does the drawing and the saving, but invites us into the facilitating**

So, Jesus wants to use you wherever you are and whatever you’ve got and involve you in the ministry that He is doing. And, guys, I just can’t get my head wrapped around that. That the God of the universe would invite you and me into what He is doing. And we are like, “Me? I don’t know enough.” And He’s like, “You don’t need to know enough, just give me a small boat.”

And He wasn’t inviting them to do a job that He didn’t want to do. He’s inviting them to do the ministry that He was already doing. Jesus was more than capable of getting His own small boat. But He said, “Hey, I want to involve these guys.” He didn’t need them, but He chose to involve them.



In fact, we're going to see this later in chapter 8 when another large crowd of 4,000 people gather around Jesus. And they've been there for three days. They've had nothing to eat. And Jesus is concerned, "Man, three days is a lot of food. Man, I can go 40, but you can only go three." And He's like, "Listen, I don't want them passing out while I'm teaching." So, He was like, "Man, we need to find some food."

So, Jesus says to the disciples say, "Jesus, how are we supposed to find enough food to feed them out here in the wilderness?" Translation, the nearest Costco is two hours away. And Jesus doesn't say to them, "Hey, guys. Funny that you should ask that. Watch this. Watch what I'm about to do." He doesn't do that.

Here's what He does. In Mark, chapter 8, verse 5 He says:

"How much bread do you have?"

Question. Did Jesus need the bread? The answer is no. But He chose to use what they had on them. There is no way the 12 disciples had enough bread on them to feed 4,000 people. And He goes, "How much bread do you have? I don't need you, but I want to involve you."

Guys, that is so important for us to get our heads around because there are more of us who have responded to Jesus in salvation than have responded to say, "Hey, Jesus. Here I am. Send me. Whatever I've got could You use?"

And the reason why we oftentimes disqualify ourselves from it is because we think we don't know enough, we're too pinned in shame from our past. We think, "God would never use somebody like me." Or, we have a tendency to look at other people's boats they bring to Jesus, "Oh, they've got a spiritual yacht. What am I going to do with my little dingy?" And Jesus is like, "Just give me whatever is available."

Listen. He doesn't need you. But He wants to involve you. And can I just say that for those of you, your spiritual life has hit a plateau, your time in God's Word has become bland, maybe the culprit is that you are allowing God... You are receiving something from God, but you are not necessarily allowing that to flow through you to others.

Can I just ask it this way?

**What "small boat" is He asking you to get ready?**



What's your small boat that He is asking you to get ready? Maybe for some of you that's to volunteer to lead a junior high girl or boys' small group and then stay with them all the way through senior year. You say, "I'm just going to commit to the same group of kids all the way through their senior year as their spiritual mentor." Some of you have done that. It's a tremendous blessing.

Some of you, maybe your small boat is, "You know what? I'm just going to volunteer as a Difference Maker on Easter." "I'm going to sign up to go on a Go Trip, overseas." I'm leaving for Kenya a week from tomorrow. Some of you, maybe you need to be on the next trip.

For some of you, maybe your small boat is, "You know what? I'll take dinner over to my brand-new neighbors and I'll begin an intentional relationship with them."

Listen. God doesn't just want to do a work in you but through you. And if your spiritual life has reached a plateau, this, quite possibly, could be the culprit. The reason why the Dead Sea is called dead isn't because there isn't any water in it, it's because water flows into the Dead Sea, it's dead because nothing flows out. And we've got a lot of Christians that way. Podcasts, sermons, Bible reading, devotions—constantly receiving, receiving, receiving nothing flows out.

Look at what it says in 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." (NIV)

Now, I just want to go ahead and call it out that these two verses are really odd. Are they not? The impure spirits. This is the first time we've seen them in Mark's gospel. These are the demons, the agents of Satan, fallen angels, oftentimes referred to as unclean or impure spirits. And they are following Jesus around. That shouldn't surprise us because Jesus is the enemy and He's ushering in a Kingdom that is opposed to their kingdom so they are keeping close tabs on him.

You've heard me say this before. The birthmark of every believer is a bullseye. Oftentimes Satan will leave you alone until you become a threat to His kingdom by following after Jesus.

And the demons, they are very well aware of Jesus' actions and movements. They are not far away. They are lurking in the shadows. But here's what is really unusual. Mark says that they fall down and cry out, "You are the Son of God." It kind of sounds like a worship night.



And you are like, "Well, this is kind of odd. What are we to do with this? Did they just become Christians?" Well, we can rule that one out right away because Jesus tells them to be quiet. Zip it. Like shut up. Stop saying that.

You may be like, "Well, why did Jesus tell them to stop saying that because is it not true?" Yes, the statement is true. You would think that He would let them declare it even though they were demons.

How many of you—maybe this has never happened. Maybe, hypothetically, you had a social gathering and you hear a group of people within ear shot, you are not part of their conversation but you can hear it and they bring you up. They start talking about you but they don't know you are there. But instead of slander or gossip, they start bragging on you. And they start saying very flattering things about you.

And as you are listening you are going, "That's not entirely true. You're exaggerating." How many of you would walk over to the group and correct them? How many of you would go, "What does it hurt?" You know? They are saying things that are very nice about me, I'm not saying them."

So, you would think that Jesus would hear this from the demons and He would be like, "Well, it is true." But Jesus tells them to be quiet. Why? Here's why. He did not want the evil spirits declaring who He was first.

Listen, guys. They were saying the right, true thing with the wrong motive. And that was enough for Jesus to stiff arm them and shut them down. And He goes, "You are not going to be the method by which My name gets out."

Now. Here's the application and warning and encouragement for us. In Matthew, chapter 7, verse 21 Jesus would say it like this:

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven," (NIV)

That should not scare you but sober you. And He goes:

It brings up an interesting question, "Well, I thought I was saved by grace through faith. Here He says I've got to do something." Hold onto that. Matthew would go on in chapter 15 and Jesus would say:

"These people honor me with their lips," here's getting right to the base of it, "but their hearts are far from me." Matthew 15:8 (NIV)



See, here's what we learn:

### **Jesus doesn't just hear the confessions of your mouth, but knows the motive of your heart**

And the reason why He is telling the demons to be quiet is that the demons can say the right thing but only a disciple can say the right thing with the right heart. So, yes, your mouth matters but not alone. Anybody can say anything, but if their heart isn't convinced, then there is an incongruency there that is called empty religion or hypocrisy.

So, He says, "What really matters is the confession of your mouth but also the posture of your heart." And Romans 10 brings these two things together to give us assurance here. It says:

"If you declare with your mouth," these words, "'Jesus is Lord,' and," He's combining these, "believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."

Period.

This isn't like a question. This isn't a hypothetical. It's not a what if. It's a statement of fact. It's a truth and it's a promise that we can be assured by. But then He goes on in verse 10:

"For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved." (NIV)

So, the application is:

### **God is looking for yielded hearts, not just confessing mouths**

Now, I want to say that oftentimes I'll get questions, as a pastor. And one of the top questions that I will get from people, typically from those who haven't yet placed their trust in Jesus and they are using this question as an objection to do so, and maybe you've thought this question or heard this question—but the question goes something like this: If we are saved by grace through faith, then salvation doesn't seem fair.

And then they will go on to say, "If you are telling me, that if somebody lives their entire life as a really corrupt, horrible person, hurting all kinds of people, but then on their death bed, last second, hail Mary—you know jump shot from half court—they profess Jesus as Lord. You telling me they get to go to heaven?"



"And then somebody who maybe lived their whole life as a good person, doing all kinds of really, really good things but then they never profess Jesus as Lord, even on their death bed, you telling me they are going to hell? How is that fair that the first person gets to go to heaven because they, last second, confessed Jesus and the other person does not."

It's a really great question. I've got three things for you to consider.

Number one is just simply this. If you were to say salvation isn't fair, you're right. And you wouldn't want salvation to be fair. Because, according to Jesus, there isn't anybody who can live up to the righteous standards that God requires as a holy, just God.

So, all of our righteous acts are like filthy rags in the eyes of God. And salvation is a great exchange where you give Jesus your sinfulness. In fact, that's the only thing you bring to the salvation equation is your sinfulness. And then Jesus blots that out with His righteousness and you get clothed in righteousness and you get called a saint of God. It is hardly fair. And I'm so grateful because none of us would stand a chance. I thought somebody would applaud for that—but that's okay.

The second thing is this. Can I just say to the whole this isn't fair kind of thing? Listen, guys. Take a deep breath. Nobody is getting into heaven on a loophole. What I mean by that is they'll kind of create this scenario where somebody lived a really, really horrible life as if God didn't see all of that and then right at the very end they didn't really have a change of heart. They just confessed Jesus as Lord, so that way they get to go to heaven when they die.

Listen. He or she didn't show up in heaven and have Jesus meet them at the gates and say, "Oh, man. You tricked me." Nobody is getting into heaven on a loophole because God knows the heart.

It's like Jesus and the conversation with the thief on the cross. We couldn't tell if the thief's heart had been changed, but Jesus knew. And He knew that it was enough to say, "Today you will be with me in Paradise."

The last thing I will say, and I want to say this very gently but I want to say it very directly. For those who are maybe using this as a reason to not give your life to Jesus, then I very gently say: Stop using the strawman, death bed confession thing as an excuse to not give your life to Jesus. We are not talking about a hypothetical death bed confession, we are talking about your confession, today. And if you know, and if Jesus is prompting you, then you need to surrender your life to Jesus Christ today.



Verses 13 through 18... It's so quiet in here and I love it. Either I've lost you or you're convicted, I don't know. I don't know. So, verse 13:

"Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted,"

I want you to underline that, He called to Him those He wanted. And you'd have to say, "Well, who does He want?" You. He calls to those He wants. If you're feeling prompted by Jesus it's because He wants you and He's calling after you.

This brings up an interesting conversation, which I do not have time to unpack. But I do talk about it on the podcast that drops on Tuesday, so you can tune into that. It's this whole debate and conversation around predestination. So the two camps. Do we choose God or does God choose us? Are we predestined: Arminianism or Calvinism.

We talk about it on the podcast. I think we solved it. No, we don't solve it. We don't solve it. But we do talk about it and I know I've had a number of questions, increasingly so. They usually pop up every year. And it's kind of this idea... I want you to know that Jesus here, He calls to those He wanted. If you want to know more about this topic, tune into the podcast on Tuesday when we talk about it. And it says:

"...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. 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"),"

Best nickname ever, sounds like an AC/DC song.

"Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him." (NIV)

Now, Mark has already told us about the calling of five disciples. He's talked about Peter and Andrew, James and John, and Matthew the Levite, but he doesn't tell us the back story with this moment in which Jesus called the rest of them. He just kind of gives us a list of the twelve disciples.



And the number 12 is not some random number. I think there is a practical reason and a spiritual reason. The number 12 is a pretty good size small group. Something about 12 is just really dynamic. It's not big enough to where everybody can't contribute, but it's small enough to where everybody can get to know each other. The other thing is that 12 is representative of the 12 tribes of Israel—12 is a number in the Old Testament that represents authority and power.

What I want you to know is that these are 12 ordinary, flawed, very diverse men—they would have had very different opinions on social and political issues by the way—we'll get into that in a minute. And Jesus is calling them, to do something, to be a part of His Kingdom coming in ways they could never do alone.

Now, one of the quick observations... I want to make kind of a quick observation and then I'm going to get into these guys. First there is something I want you to know:

### **Jesus called them on purpose**

He wasn't just taking what He could get. This was not the B team. Now, humanly speaking, these are not the most qualified candidates. But Mark says, "Jesus called those He wanted." And each of these guys had unique personalities and characteristics and sin issues and strengths and weaknesses. We're going to get into that in a minute. And it should greatly, greatly encourage all of us.

Because if He could use them, He can use you. Some of you right now have the gift of faith. You came to Christ quickly and early—like from a little kid you placed your trust in Jesus. Maybe you are the only one in your family who has given their life to Jesus. And you've had no issues, you've had no crisis of faith, you are following after Jesus. Others of you, though, your relationship with Jesus is more like a gradual crockpot conversion. And you know what? God takes both. And God knew what He was doing when He created you and He sees you and calls you.

What I want to do, in the remainder of our time, is I want to just do something a little bit unusual and just go through this list of names. Because I don't know about you guys, but whenever I do my Daily Bible Reading and I come across a list of names, all of a sudden I become a speed reader. And I don't want to do that with these guys because there is a story behind each of them that should greatly encourage each one of us.



So, for the remainder of our time let me just go through each one of them. Here's what I want to ask you to do. I'm going to tell you who they are, their strengths and their weaknesses and their flaws and the things that Jesus could redeem. And then how they died, what the end of their life was. And what we can learn. And I want you just to see here, if you see anything in one or more of these individuals, that you can reflect in yourself, it should greatly encourage you that if God can use them, He can use you.

Here's the first one:

### **Matthew (the tax collector)**

Matthew, otherwise known as the tax collector: we've already talked about him a few weeks ago. So, I won't spend a ton of time. His other name is Levi. He worked for the Romans collecting taxes for Rome on the back of his own people. That's why his own people hated him.

And he had the shortest conversation with Jesus ever. He was in the middle of a shift behind his tax collector booth and it's like 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Jesus comes up and says, "Hey, follow Me." And Matthew is like, "Okay." No two-week notice. Nothing. And he just leaves and follows after Jesus.

I think Matthew was a numbers guy. I think he was highly educated. I think he loved math, which I don't know about you but I'm totally out on that. I went to Bible College so I didn't have to take math. But Matthew loved it.

Some of you are numbers people. You love numbers and math. And actually you have a mind for the financial. I think Matthew had a mind for the financial. I also think that he struggled with it a little bit, which is why, in his gospel, he writes a lot about money. He called it a treasure. And he would say, "Wherever your treasure is, there your heart will be also." I think Matthew wrote that because he learned that.

Maybe some of you are really good at business. I know many of you have started businesses as entrepreneurs and you sold them. Making money is not hard for you. And that is a good thing. You work hard. You make lots of money. You're good at it. But I want to encourage you to be like Matthew. Don't just use it to build your kingdom, but leverage it to build God's Kingdom.

An ancient writer, Socrates, would say that Matthew preached in Ethiopia to the court of the royalty. And the king's daughter was converted through his preaching. And tradition says that because of that he was stabbed to death by a swordsman in Ethiopia.



Matthew really inspires me, a whole bunch of you can maybe relate to Matthew. Can I just say this? If you can connect to Matthew in any way, can I just ask you this question? Are you ready and willing to follow Jesus wherever He calls you? Even if that is out of your job, out of a vocation, from one degree to another, from one relationship to another knowing that your best ability is your availability. And, like Matthew, maybe you need to say to Jesus this afternoon, "Jesus, the answer is yes. Now, what's the question?" That's Matthew.

Here's the second one:

### **Simon (the zealot)**

I included him next because he's the exact opposite of Matthew. Zealot describes not only his personality but what he did. Zealots were political extremists. Any of you know them? He believed paying taxes to Rome was a sin against God. What did Matthew do? Collected taxes for Rome.

So, Zealots were revolutionaries and they could be very, very violent. They would carry curved daggers in their clothing and then they would work their way into political crowds and they would assassinate Roman sympathizers. Rome called them domestic terrorists.

So, right off the bat Jesus calls Simon the Zealot and Matthew the tax collector who would have been the most unlikely pair—ideological opposites, "I need you guys to be in my small group." And if any of you have ever had to lead a small group when things got out of hand, so did Jesus. Zealots would have wanted to kill guys like Matthew. And Jesus called them both.

Here's what Jesus did with Simon. He took a guy willing to kill for an earthly kingdom and taught him to die for an eternal one. Tradition says that Simon went all the way to Persia preaching the gospel and was eventually killed by being sawn in half. So, in old cathedrals and statues he is depicted as holding a saw.

So, before Jesus he had zeal and passion and a high level of commitment. But all of that came out in destructive ways. He was willing to fight for what he believed in. After Jesus, Jesus takes all of that and He sanctifies that zeal. He didn't change his personality but He redirected it. He redirected the fire and the zeal in him for good. And he became just as passionate about saving lives as he was killing his enemies.



You know what I think? If they would have had church security teams in the first century, Simon would have been the first one. And we learn that there is a place for you in kingdom work if you have a combat background and a lot of zeal. We need men and women, as the great theologian Liam Neeson says, "With a particular set of skills." We need protectors. That's Simon.

The next one on the list would be:

### **Andrew (Peter's brother)**

That's Peter's brother. He was known for being a connector. He was always introducing people to each other and to Jesus. He was bringing insiders and outsiders to Jesus. He brought Peter. He brought a boy who had loaves and fish to Jesus. He brought the Greeks in John, chapter 12. And it shows that he really cared about helping to form connections.

Eventually he was killed in Greece—crucified on an X shaped cross. He wasn't nailed to it. He was tied to it. So, he lived a lot longer. And tradition says that he hung there on that cross for two days preaching the gospel to his tormentors until he died.

He wasn't looking for attention. He didn't ever write a gospel. He wasn't a part of Jesus' inner three. But he wanted to connect people to Jesus. And he did not have to be at the center or get credit.

And we learn that there are a whole lot of people who have the gift of connection. Some of you are natural connectors. You are constantly going, "I need to introduce Sarah to Jill." "I need to introduce Phil to Ted." So, you are making text introductions, you're setting up coffees and social connections as an act of generosity.

And you will likely invite more people to church in one year than most people will in their entire life. And you won't always get the credit but you will be a part of somebody's story for all of eternity. And people are going to be crowding around you in heaven going, "Because of you and that connection that you made, I'm here."

The next would be:

### **Thomas (Didymus — the twin — the doubter)**



Otherwise known as Didymus, the twin, or for what we mostly know him as, the doubter, which is really unfortunate. He was famous for doubting. And the reason why is after Jesus' resurrection all of the disciples had seen Him but Thomas was out getting wings or something. And he's like, "I'm not going to believe until I see the scars in Jesus' hands and feet."

I can respect that. I'm from Missouri, the Show Me State. I get that. I get that. Thomas kind of gets a bad rap. We call him doubting Thomas. And I think when we get to heaven and we see Thomas we're going to go, "Oh, doubting Thomas." And he's going to go, "Come on, man. Really? I said other stuff." I think he gets a bad rap. I don't think he was so much doubting, I think he's just realistic. And I can respect that.

He was also courageous. Because he said this in John 11:

"Let us also go, that we may die with him." John 11:16 (NIV)

That's Thomas too. But his nickname isn't Thomas the courageous one. He gets canned on the doubting. Here's what I love about Thomas. He didn't just believe when he saw evidence, he was willing to change his mind. He didn't believe easily, but out of belief came a strong conviction of faith.

Tradition says that he traveled farther with the gospel than any other of the disciples—all the way to India in AD 52. And there are still Christians to this day, in India, who base their heritage back to St. Thomas. He was eventually killed with a spear.

Some of you have the spiritual gift of faith and others of you, you have the gift of skepticism and cynicism. And I do call it a gift because you are not easily duped. Some of you are practical and you are unsure and you are not easily convinced.

And I want you to know that oftentimes the biggest doubters become the boldest believers. Here's why. If you aren't easily talked into faith, guess what? You can't be easily talked out of it. And so, as you grow in your faith your courage will make an impact. And people will go, "Well, you are being intellectually honest."

### **Philip (the pragmatic)**



The next one would be Philip, otherwise known as the pragmatic. He was analytical, data driven, and rational. In almost every recorded interaction in the gospels, Philip is talking about logistics, facts, and procedures. When Jesus wanted to feed 5,000 people He specifically asked Philip where they could buy bread. I don't think that was by any accident. I think Jesus knew Philip was going to come up with an answer.

Philip didn't over spiritualize it. He didn't go, "Well, Jesus with you all things are possible." He didn't say that. He started by pulling out his calculator and crunching numbers. He starts doing math and stuff. And here's the answer he gave him in John 6:7:

"Philip answered him, 'It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!'" (NIV)

Wow, Philip. You did all that math in your head right then? When he was talking to Nathaniel in John, Chapter 1 about Jesus, he didn't use emotional hypes, specific data points or biographical details. He said to Nathaniel, "Hey, we found the One who Moses wrote about in the law." And Nathaniel knew the law too and was like, "Nazareth, what good could come from Nazareth?" He's all snarky and cynical. And Philip does not respond emotionally, but appeals to the practical. He looks at him and said, "I don't know. Man, just come and see. Just come and see."

At the last supper Jesus is talking about what is to come and it's all a bit confusing and Philip is a visual learner so he kind of gets lost and he says, "I don't know what you are talking about," and then he says in John, chapter 14, verse 8:

"Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." (NIV)

Translation, I have no idea what you are talking about, so show us pictures. That's what he is saying. And for those of you who love object lessons, and you are a visual learner, Philip is your guy.

Maybe your spiritual gift is spreadsheets. And can I just say, man, we need you. Otherwise we would forget to pay the electric bill. However, can I just remind you that you need to be reminded that God's power goes beyond human math. Because with God, oftentimes the math doesn't math. With God two fish and five loaves does not equal seven things, it equals a feast for 5,000 with doggie bags left over. So, when you use human math, make sure there is room for faith that anything is possible with God.



## **Bartholomew (Nathaniel — the quick thinker)**

The next would be Bartholomew, otherwise known as Nathaniel. He's kind of a snarky, quick thinker. He's blunt. He's quick witted. He's really honest. In John, chapter 1, at Philip's invitation he goes to see Jesus. And I love their interaction. Jesus looks at him in John, chapter 1, verse 47 as he sees Nathaniel approaching—they'd never met before—and Jesus looks at him and He goes: "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." (NIV)

And Bartholomew responds this way:

"How do you know me?"

And it's important that you read it with that tone because he's not going, "Well, how do you know me?" He's going, "HOW DO YOU KNOW ME?" Translation: You don't know me. It's a challenge. He's like what are you talking about. We've never met. And Jesus answers him:

"I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." John 1:48 (NIV)

What's that all about? That's a euphemism for deep, private study of the Torah. Jesus said, "I saw you under the fig tree," here's what He was saying, "Hey, man. I saw you searching the Scriptures looking for truth when you didn't want anybody else to know you were searching for the truth. And that flipped him. And Nathaniel responds back to him in chapter 1, verse 49. He goes:

"Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel." (NIV)

Man, can I just say that some of you have quick minds and faster tongues. And you process things really quickly and you are a little bit snarky and a little bit cynical. He's your guy. He went on to minister to Armenia and converted the King of Armenia to faith. And his brother had him killed because of it. So, it cost him everything.

By the way, you're going to see that 10 of the 12 disciples all were killed for their faith. You've got to ask yourself this question: How many would die for something they knew to be a lie?

And it is believed that he suffered the most horrific martyrdom of the 12. He was skinned alive and beheaded. And in Medieval art he's often depicted with skin hanging over his arm like a coat.



And he teaches us that faith isn't just about blind acceptance. So, if you think that is what it is about, then think again. And if you are intellectually honest enough to ask tough questions, then be intellectually honest enough to accept true answers. And use your quick wit to solve issues that keep people from knowing Jesus. Don't just use it to tear things down and deconstruct, rebuild things, and build them up.

### **James (little James, the son of Alphaeus)**

The next would be James, otherwise known as Little James the son of Alphaeus. He's probably the disciple we know the least about. Some people think he is the brother of Matthew. He kept a really, really low profile because he was stuck between two more prominent James(s).

You have James, part of the inner three. And then you have James, the half-brother of Jesus who was not a disciple but he was a leader in the church in Jerusalem and he wrote the book of James. This James though, if any of you are a middle child then you can relate to him. He has no recorded words in the gospels. Eventually he was stoned to death in Jerusalem.

His mom was one of the women, interestingly enough, who stayed at the foot of the cross with Jesus' mother, Mary. And we can make this connection that a woman like that would have had the character to raise a son who would do what needs to be done without needing the credit.

There are a lot of you in our church, you don't need a platform to be known. You are just faithful behind the scenes. And if you serve behind the scenes, I want you to know that even if nobody else sees you or gives you credit for it, God sees it. Great is your reward in heaven.

### **Judas (Iscaiot — the betrayer)**

The next would be Judas Iscaiot, the betrayer. Cue the ominous music. He's the villain. Here's what scares me about Judas. He spent three years with Jesus. He ate meals with Him. Walked with Him. Spent time with Him. Saw all of the miracles. Listened to all of the sermons: unchanged.

It's sobering to know that you can grow up around the things of God without being changed by God, people who call themselves Christians but whose hearts are not aligned with Christ. And here's the deal. How can you tell? You can't.



In fact, Jesus would tell parables of the wheat and the tares, the sheep and the goats, and He would say, "We don't know." He goes, "One day, though, I will separate them." We can't know what is in somebody's heart. However we can discern fruit in their lives over time.

And with Judas, there were tells that he was headed in the wrong direction. In John, chapter 12, verse 5 there is a beautiful scene where this sinful woman comes to Jesus anointed his feet with expensive perfume and Jesus is receiving her worship. Guess who doesn't like it? Judas. In chapter 12, verse 5, he says this:

"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor?"

Sounds like a noble question, doesn't it? He goes:

"It was worth a year's wages." (NIV)

Sounds really spiritual and reasonable for him to ask that question. But, listen. It was motivated by selfish, evil intent. He didn't care about the poor. Verse 6 tells us that he was in charge of the money bag. He wanted the money for himself. And we learn that not everyone who asks questions asks with good motives. And he ultimately betrayed Jesus and took his own life.

Listen. If there are any of you who have ever felt the pain of betrayal, maybe there was a friend, a spouse, a family member who said they would always love you and always be with you and they turned their back on you and they walked away and they wounded you on the way out, then Jesus knows how that feels. And if Jesus had people betray Him, and He was perfect, don't be surprised when it happens to you as well. And do not allow that to cause your spirit to become bitter because even though Jesus was betrayed, He still fulfilled the mission.

### **Thaddeus (Judas, Jude, Son of James)**

I've just got a few more.

Thaddeus, otherwise known as Judas, Jude, or Son of James. Thaddeus faced the world's largest PR crisis. His name was Judas. And I think that is why he goes, "Hey, guys. Could you call me Thaddeus from now on?" It was likely a nickname. In Acts Luke calls him Judas, Son of James. Once in John 14:22 John is writing and Jesus is talking and he interrupts with a question. And John says it this way. He goes:

"Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot)..."



He's like, "I'm going to make it clear, we are talking about a different Judas." And I think because of this association with Judas the Betrayer, Thaddeus became known as the Patron Saint of Lost Causes and the Hopeless.

Now, let me explain what I mean. In the early days, Christians developed this practice of praying, not necessarily to God, but in addition to God, saints. And in addition to the saints they were praying to the disciples. And they didn't want to pray to Judas for fear of accidentally praying to the wrong one. So, after going through all of the other guys, their last resort was to pray to Saint Jude.

So this is believed to be part of the inspiration for St. Jude's Hospital, where it got its name. He's the patron saint of hopeless and desperate situations. So, they'd run out of disciples to pray to and they prayed to him.

Man, if you've ever wrestled with your reputation and what people think of you, if you've ever been slandered and your reputation has been maligned, God can redeem it and He can use what once hurt your reputation as a beacon of hope to others. If you have ever taken a hit, God can respond and use you in a big, big way. There is nothing and no one who is hopeless.

Last three:

### **James (big James, the son of Zebedee)**

James, big James, the son of Zebedee, he was one of Peter's closest friends. He was part of Jesus' inner three. Jesus did have favorites. So, if any of you have ever said it's not wise to have favorites, Jesus did.

James got to witness things the others didn't. He got to witness the transfiguration of Jesus on the mount. He got to see Jesus raise Jarius's daughter from the dead, He and his brother were fiery and ambitious and that's why Jesus gave them the most epic nickname, Sons of Thunder. He's an alpha. He's bold and ambitious. One time there was this Samaritan village that disrespected Jesus. And I love what James and John said to Jesus in Luke 9. When the disciples James and John saw this they asked:

"Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" Luke 9:54 (NIV)

But, Jesus was like, "Guys, lay off of the testosterone and Crea Tea, alright? It's a little much."



And he was one of the first apostles to be martyred. In Acts 6:12 he was beheaded by Herod Agrippa. And so, notice the irony. He was the most alpha male of all of them and he was the first to die.

And early on the Christians kind of thought they invincible because Jesus had been resurrected from the dead. So, they thought, "Maybe we're all invincible." And then they realized, "Maybe we're not."

Some of you can relate to James' temperament because you've got a big personality and maybe you've had people say, "Your personality is too big for us." But it's not too big for God. God wants to take you the way that you've been shaped and wired to redirect, redeem, and renew you for His purposes just like James.

### **John (the beloved, son of Zebedee)**

John, the beloved, son of Zebedee. He self-identified. In his gospel, John, he's always saying that he is the one whom Jesus loved. He says it over and over again. It's like the biggest, humble brag ever. He says, "I'm the one Jesus loved the most."

And he was the only disciple who didn't die a violent death. He actually lived to a really old age. He wrote the gospel of John much, much later than the other three. He wrote the epistles of 1, 2, 3 John. He was sequestered on Patmos where Jesus met him and gave him a vision and he wrote the book of Revelation.

He died of old age in Ephesus. He became the first grandfather figure to the early church. You can see it in his epistles. In 1 John he's always saying things like this, "My dear children," "My friends," "My beloved."

Can I just say this? What we learn from John—this isn't always the case but just a general observation. One of the dangers as people grow older is that we can accidentally go one of two ways. We can get angrier or meaner or we can become loving sages.

And we learn this message from John. He grew old and he became a loving sage. We need more spiritual grandfathers and grandmothers. How do we do that? It's by dealing with your stuff in your 30s and 40s so you can be a sweet sage in your 50s and 60s and beyond.

### **Simon Peter (flawed leader)**



Last one. Simon Peter. He was a flawed leader. We love him because he said dumb stuff. And we are like... I don't know about you guys, but man, I've said some dumb stuff. I can relate to that guy. Here's the difference between us and Peter. Peter's dumb stuff gets recorded in the Bible, the best selling book of all time.

I actually love Peter maybe more—he's probably my favorite. He was just a natural leader. He was impulsive. He often spoke before thinking. He was like a ready, fire, aim kind of a guy. And he just said some dumb stuff.

But he also said some really good stuff. He speaks in approximately 33 verses in the gospels, which is more than all of the other disciples combined. Interestingly enough, you know who comes in as number two with more words than anybody else? Judas, the betrayer. So, you make the connection.

He said some really, really great things. One time Jesus was asking the disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" And they were all talking about it, "Well, a prophet. Maybe Elijah." "Well, who do you say that I am?" And Peter goes, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." And Jesus says to him

"...I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." Matthew 16:18 (NIV)

Now, a lot of people like to say that Jesus is saying that Peter was the rock, and He's going to build His church on Peter. But Peter was a sinner. Peter was a flawed human being. As we see, he denied Jesus three times. What Jesus was saying is that on that rock of confession, "Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God," "I am going to build My church on that."

In John 6 many disciples are deserting Jesus. And He asked the 12, "Are you guys going to leave me too?" And I love Peter's response. He says in John 6:

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." John 6:68 (NIV)

I love that. He's goes, "Where else am I going to go?" He goes on to lead the church in Jerusalem and then in Rome. Tradition says that he was crucified in Rome, by Nero, upside down because he didn't want to be crucified like Jesus.

He had some great moments, man. Oftentimes his great moments and his worst moments were in the same day. Any of you relate? He walked on water and he sank. And it shows that he was brave, he was foolish, he got rebuked, he was ready to repent. Jesus called him Satan one time and blessed him in others. Peter denied knowing Him after he said that he wouldn't. And Jesus found and restored him on a beach and He used him.



Can I just say this to you guys? Guys, listen: You are not defined by your worst moments. Humility that comes from failure will help you withstand the prestige that comes from success. Which is why I think Peter would say in 1 Peter that love covers over a multitude of sins.

Now, as we walked through that list I hope that you were able to see parts of yourself in one or all of these guys and it assured you. I had a friend who, between hours, texted me this Vin diagram and he goes, "Hey, man. This is me. [Clockwise: Matthew, Nathaniel, Simon the Zealot, Philip.] I'm a combination of Matthew, Nathaniel, Simon, and Philip."

Maybe you need to do your own Vin diagram. You are like, "You know what? Here's how I relate to these guys."

Here is the word of assurance that I want to give you: If Jesus could use them, why are you sitting out? Jesus wants to use you, man. Your broken story, your divorce, your addiction, your personality flaw, your strengths, your gifts, your weaknesses—He says, "Hey, would you bring it all to Me? And watch what I can do to redeem it and renew it and use it for the building of my Kingdom."

So, today what I want to ask is for you to respond to the call of Jesus. He is always calling individuals out of the crowd. And right now I'm looking at a crowd. And Jesus wants to call out individuals. And so there are two different callings here.

One: If you've never responded to Jesus as Lord and Savior that you would do that today. That you would submit your life to Him by confessing your sin and repenting of it and letting go of the sin you have identified with to identify with Jesus. And ask Him to reside in your heart. And He will. Whoever confesses with their mouth and yields their heart to Him will be saved.

Second: Maybe you did that years ago but you're still sitting on the sidelines thinking God could never use you. And He wants you to bring your small boat to Him, so that way He can do through you what He can do through no other.

Maybe you need to respond this way in the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Here am I Lord. Send me." And maybe it's time for you to make a job change. Maybe it's time for you to stay in your job. Maybe it's time for you to extend that invitation. Maybe it's time for you to have that conversation. Maybe it's time for you to say, "I'm going to stop using my gifts and skill set just to build my kingdom but leverage them to build His."

Whatever calling He's placed on your life, respond today.



Let's pray together.

Father, thank You so much that You are a God who involves us when You don't have to. You are a God who sees in us what maybe we could never see for ourselves. So, God, I pray that there would be some here today, maybe for the very, very first time who would submit their life to You as Lord and Savior. We celebrate that.

And I pray that there would be some here who say, "You know what? I need to make myself available. The answer is yes. Now, Lord God, what is the question?"

We thank You for Your grace and Your goodness and Your redemption. We ask this in Jesus' name. And the redeemed say: Amen and Amen.

