

Mark 3:1-19
June 18, 2023

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: When we decided to accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior, we in essence accepted His call to “follow Him.” What does it mean to you to “follow Him?” [Let people engage]

Transition: Someone once said, “*Our problem with following Jesus is we are trying to be a better version of us rather than a more accurate reflection of Him.*” Following Jesus is not about being a better you, because you have to die to yourself, it’s about being more like Him. He must increase and you must decrease.

When Jesus calls you, He is calling you to leave things behind. To leave your old self and embrace your new self. When Jesus calls you, He is calling you into a life of transformation that begins to chisel the hard, selfish, prideful, lazy, and greedy you off of you to reveal His Spirit in you.

When Jesus calls you, He is calling you to a purpose that involves His kingdom and that has eternal ramifications. He is calling you into a spiritual war that you cannot fight in your own strength and win. You must fight in His power, His strength, and in His way. Victory is guaranteed if you do it His way.

Today we are thinking about Jesus calling us, training us, appointing us, sending us, and empowering us to bless others, minister to others, and help see lives transformed by the power His gospel. Let’s begin with Mark 3:1-19.

BOOK:

³ Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. ² Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. ³ Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.”

⁴ Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent.

⁵ He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. ⁶ Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

Crowds Follow Jesus

⁷ Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. ⁸ When they heard all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. ⁹ Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. ¹⁰ For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. ¹¹ Whenever the

evil (unclean) spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.”¹² But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.

The Appointing of the Twelve Apostles

¹³ Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. ¹⁴ He appointed twelve—designating them apostles (some manuscripts don’t say this)—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach ¹⁵ and to have authority to drive out demons. ¹⁶ These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); ¹⁷ James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder); ¹⁸ Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Someone once said, “*Our problem with following Jesus is we are trying to be a better version of us rather than a more accurate reflection of Him.*” Following Jesus is not about being a better you, because you have to die to yourself, it’s about being more like Him. He must increase and you must decrease.

When Jesus calls you, He is calling you to leave things behind. To leave your old self and embrace your new self. When Jesus calls you, He is calling you into a life of transformation that begins to chisel the hard, selfish, prideful, lazy, and greedy you off of you to reveal His Spirit in you.

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Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 118-120). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Freedom (Mark 2:23–3:12)

The Sabbath was cherished by the Jews as a sacred institution. God gave the people of Israel the Sabbath after they came out of Egypt (Ex. 20:8–11; Neh. 9:14), and it was a special sign between Israel and Jehovah (Ex. 31:13–17). There is no record in Scripture that God ever gave the Sabbath to any other nation. So, when Jesus began openly to violate the Sabbath traditions, it was like declaring war against the religious establishment. He began His campaign by healing a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years (John 5), and then followed with the events recorded in this section.

Jewish tradition stated that there were thirty-nine acts that were strictly forbidden on the Sabbath. Moses had prohibited work on the Sabbath, but he did not give many specifics (Ex. 20:10). It was wrong to kindle a fire for cooking (Ex. 35:3), gather fuel (Num. 15:32ff), carry burdens (Jer. 17:21ff), or transact business (Neh. 10:31; 13:15, 19). But Jewish tradition went into great detail and even informed the people how far they could travel on the Sabbath (200 cubits, based on Josh. 3:4). In short, the Sabbath Day had become a crushing burden, a symbol of the galling religious bondage that had captured the nation.

After healing the man at the Pool of Bethesda, our Lord's next act of "Sabbath defiance" was to walk through the fields on the Sabbath and permit His disciples to pluck the grain, rub it between their hands, and eat it. It was not illegal for a hungry person to take some of his neighbor's fruit or grain, provided he did not fill a vessel or use a harvesting implement (Deut. 23:24–25). However, that was not what upset the Pharisees. What upset them was that the disciples had worked on the Sabbath Day!

When you read Matthew's account of this event, you note that Jesus gave three arguments to defend His disciples: what David did (Matt. 12:3–4), what the priests did (Matt. 12:5–6), and what the Prophet Hosea said (Matt. 12:7–8). Mark's Roman readers would not be interested in Jewish prophets and priests, so Mark focused on David whom the Romans would recognize as a great hero and king. The argument is reasonable: if a hungry king and his men were permitted to eat the holy bread from the tabernacle (1 Sam. 21:1–6), then it was right for the Lord of the Sabbath to permit His men to eat the grain from His fields. David broke a definite law given by Moses, for the showbread was for the priests only (Lev. 24:5–9); but the disciples had violated only a man-made tradition. God is surely more concerned with meeting the needs of people than He is with protecting religious tradition. The Pharisees had their priorities confused.

Did Jesus make a mistake when He mentioned Abiathar as the high priest? The record in 1 Samuel 21 names Abimelech, the father of Abiathar (1 Sam. 22:20), as high priest; so our Lord's words appear to be a contradiction. They are not. It is possible that father and son each had both names (1 Chron. 18:16 and 24:6; 1 Sam. 22:20 and 2 Sam. 8:17). Also it is likely that our Lord used "Abiathar" to refer to the Old Testament *passage* about Abiathar rather than to the man. This is the way the Jews identified sections of the Word since their manuscripts did not have chapters and verses such as we have today in our Bibles (see Mark 12:26).

On that same Sabbath Day, Jesus went into the synagogue to worship; and while He was there, He deliberately healed a man. Certainly He could have waited one more day, but once again He wanted to challenge the pharisaical legalistic traditions. This time the Pharisees (Luke 6:7) were expecting Him to heal, so they kept their eyes wide open. Our Lord's questions in

Mark 3:4 were never answered by His enemies. Since *evil* is at work every day, including the Sabbath Day, why should *good* not be at work as well? Death is always at work, but that should not hinder us from seeking to save life.

Jesus could see “the hardening of their hearts” (literal translation), and their sin made Him angry. Our Lord never became angry at the publicans and sinners, but He did express anger toward the self-righteous Pharisees (Matt. 23). They would rather protect their traditions than see a man healed! The man, of course, knew little about this spiritual conflict. He simply obeyed our Lord’s command, stretched out his hand, and was healed.

So incensed were the Pharisees over what Jesus had done that they united with the Herodians and started making plans to arrest Jesus and destroy Him. The Herodians were not a religious party; they were a group of Jews who were sympathetic to King Herod and supported his rule. Most of the Jews despised Herod and obeyed his laws reluctantly; so it was surprising that the Pharisees, who were strict Jews, would join themselves with these disloyal politicians. But it was a common enemy—Jesus—that brought the two groups together.

In response to this united opposition, Jesus simply withdrew from there; but He could not prevent the great crowds from following Him. These crowds were dangerous to His cause, of course, because they were not spiritually motivated; and the authorities could accuse Him of leading a popular revolt against the Romans. Yet Jesus received the people, healed the sick, and delivered the demonized. Once again, He warned the demons not to reveal who He is (Mark 1:23–26).

Our Lord had now reached a crisis in His ministry. Great crowds were following Him, but their interest was not in things spiritual. The religious leaders wanted to destroy Him, and even some of Herod’s friends were getting involved. His next step would be to spend a night in prayer (Luke 6:12), call twelve men to assist Him as His Apostles, and preach a sermon—The Sermon on the Mount—explaining the spiritual basis of His kingdom.

He offered them forgiveness, fulfillment, and freedom; but they refused His offer.

Have *you* accepted His offer?

THE SERVANT, THE CROWDS, AND THE KINGDOM

Mark 3:13–4:34

No matter where He went, God’s Servant was thronged by excited crowds (Mark 3:7–9, 20, 32; 4:1). Had Jesus been a “celebrity” and not a servant, He would have catered to the crowds and tried to please them (see Matt. 11:7–15). Instead, He withdrew from the crowds and began to minister especially to His disciples. Jesus knew that most of the people who pushed to get near Him were shallow and insincere, but His disciples did not know this. Lest they take all of this “success” seriously, Jesus had to teach these men the truth about the crowds and the kingdom. In this section, we see our Lord’s three responses to the pressure of the crowd.

He Founded a New Nation (Mark 3:13–19)

The number of the disciples is significant because there were twelve tribes in the nation of Israel. In Genesis, God started with Jacob’s twelve sons, and in Exodus, He built them into a mighty nation. Israel was chosen to bring the Messiah into the world so that through Him all the nations of the earth could be blessed (Gen. 12:1–3). However, the nation of Israel was now spiritually

decayed and ready to reject her own Messiah. God had to establish “a holy nation, a peculiar [purchased] people” (1 Peter 2:9), and the 12 Apostles were the nucleus of this new “spiritual” nation (Matt. 21:43).

Jesus spent all night in prayer before choosing these twelve men (Luke 6:12). When He selected them, He had three purposes in mind: (1) training them by personal example and teaching, (2) sending them out to preach the Gospel, and (3) giving them authority to heal and cast out demons (see Mark 1:14–15, 38–39; 6:7–13). These twelve men would thus be able to continue His work when He returned to the Father, and they would also be able to train others to carry on the ministry after them (2 Tim. 2:2).

In the New Testament, you will find three other lists of the names of the twelve disciples: Matthew 10:2–4; Luke 6:14–16; and Acts 1:13. Luke tells us that Jesus gave them the special name “apostles.” A disciple is one who learns by doing; our modern equivalent might be “an apprentice.” An “apostle” is one who is sent on official service with a commission. Jesus had many disciples but only 12 Apostles, His special “ambassadors.”

When you compare the lists, it appears that the names are arranged in pairs: Peter and Andrew; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew (Nathanael [John 1:45]); Thomas and Matthew (Levi); James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus (Judas, son of James, not Iscariot [John 14:22]); Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot. Since Jesus sent His Apostles out two by two, this was a logical way to list them (Mark 6:7).

Simon’s name was changed to Peter, “the rock” (John 1:40–42); and Levi’s was changed to Matthew, “the gift of God.” James and John were given the nicknames, “Boanerges—the sons of thunder.” We commonly think of John as the apostle of love, but he certainly did not begin with that kind of reputation, nor did James his brother (Mark 9:38–41; 10:35–39; Luke 9:54–55). It is encouraging to see what Jesus was able to do with such a diversified group of unlikely candidates for Christian service. There is still hope for us!

Mark defined the Hebrew word *Boanerges* because he was writing for Roman readers. In his Gospel you will find several of these “special notes for Gentiles” (Mark 5:41; 7:11, 34; 11:9; 14:36; 15:22, 34). The word *Canaanite* in Mark 3:18 has nothing to do with national or racial origin. It is the Hebrew word *cananaean*, which comes from a word that means “to be jealous, to be zealous.” The Zealots were a group of Jewish extremists organized to overthrow Rome; and they used every means available to advance their cause. The historian Josephus called them “daggermen.” It would be interesting to know how Simon the Zealot responded when he first met Matthew, a former employee of Rome.

If you consult a harmony of the Gospels, you will see that between Mark 3:19 and 20, Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7) and participated in the events described in Luke 7:1–8:3. Mark’s Gospel does not include that famous sermon because his emphasis is on what Jesus did rather than what Jesus said.

Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *Mark*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 115-116) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

5. THE HEALING OF THE MAN WITH A WITHERED HAND ON THE SABBATH (3:1–5) (Matt. 12:9–14; Luke 6:6–11)

3:1–2. On **another** Sabbath occasion in **the synagogue** (probably Capernaum; cf. 1:21) Jesus saw **a man with a shriveled hand** (his “right” one; cf. Luke 6:6). **Some of them** (Pharisees, cf.

Mark 3:6) were watching **Jesus** closely to see what He would do so they might find a **reason to accuse** Him. They permitted healing on the Sabbath only if a life was in danger. This man's problem was not life-threatening and could wait till the next day; so if Jesus healed him, they could accuse Him of being a **Sabbath-violator**, an offense punishable by death (cf. Ex. 31:14–17).

3:3–4. **Jesus** commanded **the man, Stand up** so the whole gathering could see his **shriveled hand**. **Then He asked** the Pharisees a rhetorical question concerning which of two kinds of action was really consistent with the purpose of **the Sabbath** in the Mosaic Law. The obvious answer is: **to do good** and **to save life** (*psychēn*, “soul”; cf. 8:35–36). Yet failure to use the Sabbath to meet this man's need (cf. 2:27) was **to do evil** (harmful misuse of its purpose) and, as ultimately happened, their malicious plotting on the Sabbath (cf. 3:6) led them **to kill**. The moral (not legal) issue of “doing good” on the Sabbath was at stake, and the Pharisees refused to debate it.

3:5. **Jesus looked around** (from *periblepomai*, an all-inclusive penetrating look; cf. v. 34; 5:32; 10:23; 11:11) **at the Pharisees in anger**. This is the only explicit reference to Jesus' anger in the New Testament. It was nonmalicious indignation coupled with deep sorrow (grief) at their obstinate insensitivity (*pōrōsei*, “hardening”; cf. Rom. 11:25; Eph. 4:18) to God's mercy and human misery.

When the man held out **his hand** at Jesus' command, it was instantly and **completely restored**. Jesus did not use any visible means that might be construed as “work” on the Sabbath. As Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28) Jesus freed it from legal encumbrances, and in grace delivered this man from his distress.

E. Conclusion: Jesus' rejection by the Pharisees (3:6)

3:6. This verse climaxes the section on Jesus' conflicts in Galilee with the religious establishment (2:1–3:5). It is Mark's first explicit reference to Jesus' death, which now began to cast its shadow over His mission. **The Pharisees** conspired immediately (*euthys*; cf. 1:10) **with the Herodians** (cf. 12:13), influential political supporters of Herod Antipas, in an unprecedented common effort to destroy Jesus (cf. 15:31–32). His authority confronted and overwhelmed their authority, so He must be killed. Their problem was how.

IV. Jesus' Later Galilean Ministry (3:7–6:6a)

The second major section of Mark's Gospel begins and concludes structurally like the first one (cf. 1:14–15 with 3:7–12; 1:16–20 with 3:13–19; 3:6 with 6:1–6a). It shows the development of Jesus' mission in the context of opposition and unbelief.

A. Introductory summary: Jesus' activity around the Sea of Galilee (3:7–12) (Matt. 12:14–21)

3:7–10. This summary passage is similar in context and character to 2:13. An added element is that **Jesus withdrew with His disciples** (emphatic first position in Gr.), who shared in both the hostility and the popular acclaim directed toward Jesus.

Many people **from Galilee followed** (nontechnical sense, “went along with”) and, attracted by **all He was doing** (i.e., healing miracles), **many ... came** from areas outside Galilee—from the south, **Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea**; the east, Transjordan (Perea); and the north, the coastal cities of **Tyre and Sidon** (in Phoenicia). Jesus spent time in all these areas (except Idumea; 5:1; 7:24, 31; 10:1; 11:11). So intense was the impact of Jesus' healing ministry and the desire of

those with diseases (*mastigas*, “scourges,” cf. 5:29 [“suffering”], 34) **to touch Him** that **He told His disciples to have a small boat ready** to escape the rush of the crowds. Only Mark reported this detail, suggesting the memory of an eyewitness such as Peter.

3:11–12. In the crowds were demoniacs, people whose speech and behavior were dominated by **evil spirits**. They recognized Jesus’ true status as **the Son of God** and were greatly threatened by His presence. Jesus did not accept their repeated (imperfect verbs) cries of recognition, and ordered (cf. 1:25; 4:39; 8:30, 32–33; 9:25) them **not to tell who He was** (cf. 1:24–25, 34). In silencing their untimely cries Jesus reaffirmed His submission to God’s plan for the *progressive* disclosure of His identity and mission.

B. Jesus’ appointment of the Twelve (3:13–19) (Matt. 10:1–4; Luke 6:12–16)

3:13. From the lakeside lowlands **Jesus went up into the hills** (of central Galilee; cf. 6:46). Taking the initiative, He summoned to Himself **those He wanted**, namely the Twelve (3:16–19), **and they came** from the crowd **to Him** (cf. Luke 6:13). Mark had already said that Jesus had many other disciples (cf. Mark 2:15).

3:14–15. **He appointed** (lit., “made”) **12** for two reasons: (a) so they could **be with Him** (immediate association for training) and (b) be sent **out** by Him **to preach** (cf. 1:4, 14) **and to have** (delegated) **authority to drive out** (*ekballein*; cf. 1:34, 39) **demons** (their future mission; cf. 6:7–13). Mark devoted attention to their association with Jesus and preparation for their ministries.

Nearly all major ancient Greek manuscripts and most early versions omit the phrase, **designating them apostles**. This seems preferable; its inclusion in a few early manuscripts was probably due to the influence of Luke 6:13 and because Mark used the term “apostles” only in Mark 6:30 where it is appropriate in a nontechnical sense.

The number 12 corresponds to the 12 tribes of Israel, thus expressing Jesus’ claim on the whole nation. “The Twelve” became an official designation or title for those appointed by Jesus on this occasion (cf. 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; 10:32; 11:11; 14:10, 17, 20, 43). Though significantly linked with Israel, they are never called a new or spiritual “Israel.” Rather they were the nucleus of a coming new community, the church (cf. Matt. 16:16–20; Acts 1:5–8).

3:16–19. These verses give a traditional list of the names of the appointed Twelve. **Simon** (cf. 14:37) heads the list. Jesus surnamed him **Peter** (cf. John 1:42), the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic *Cephas*, which means a “stone or rock.” This probably described his leadership role during Jesus’ ministry and in the early church (cf. Matt. 16:16–20; Eph. 2:20), and did not refer to his personal character. **James** and **John**, Zebedee’s sons, are surnamed **Boanerges**, a Hebrew idiom Mark interpreted as **Sons of Thunder** (cf. Mark 9:38; 10:35–39; Luke 9:54), though a more complimentary meaning (now unknown) may have been intended by Jesus.

Apart from **Andrew** (cf. Mark 1:16; 13:3), **Judas Iscariot** (cf. 14:10, 43), and possibly **James son of Alphaeus** as “James the younger” (cf. 15:40), the remaining names do not occur again in Mark: **Philip** (cf. John 1:43–45), **Bartholomew** (Nathanael; John 1:45–51), **Matthew** (Levi; cf. Mark 2:14), **Thomas** (cf. John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24–28; 21:2), James son of Alphaeus (probably not Levi’s brother; cf. Mark 2:14), **Thaddaeus** (Judas son of James; cf. Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13), and **Simon the Zealot** (“Zealot” probably indicated his zeal for God’s honor, not an extreme nationalism). In contrast was Judas Iscariot (a “man from Kerioth,” the only non-Galilean; cf. John 6:71; 13:26), **who betrayed** Jesus to His enemies (cf. Mark 14:10–11, 43–46).

Church, C.L. (1998). Mark In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 431-432). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

CONFLICT (2:18–3:6)

Mark's fourth and fifth "conflicts" concern Sabbath observance. The Pharisees interpreted plucking grain as "reaping," an illegal activity on the Sabbath (Exod. 34:21). Jesus' response was two-fold. The goal of Sabbath observance was human benefit, and Jesus' "Son of Man" means I had authority over the Sabbath. The Pharisees likewise took the law to prohibit healing unless life was in danger. Mark again recorded Jesus' anger, anger at callousness toward human need and at willful blindness to the deeper goals of the Sabbath—doing good and saving life. The five "conflict" stories conclude with an unlikely coalition of Herodians and Pharisees—political collaborators and orthodox religionists—rejecting Jesus' authority and plotting His destruction.

JESUS REJECTED (3:7–19)

The Herodians' and Pharisees' rejection of Jesus contrasts with the common people's acceptance. Jesus' popularity exceeded John's (see 1:5), extending into the Gentile areas of Lebanon and Transjordan. Such acclaim occasioned some inconvenience. The silencing of demons suggests that the time was not yet right for the revelation of Jesus' brand of divine sonship (15:39; see 9:9).

Their number points to the Twelve's foundational role in the new people of God. Their responsibility as disciples was twofold: to be with Jesus and to be sent out to preach His message and exercise His authority over demons.

Mark 3:19b–35 is the first of the "sandwiches," texts where Mark inserted one narrative—the "meat"—into another—the "bread"—to highlight their common emphasis. Here both accounts concern the legitimacy of Jesus' ministry: Jesus' family thought Him "out of his mind"; the Jerusalem scribes supposed He was in league with the "ruler of demons." Jesus was the "stronger one" who had entered Satan's world and was "plundering his possessions" through His exorcisms.

Leavell, L.P. (1972). Mark. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (pp. 620-621). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

In 2:23 through 3:6 we find two criticisms centering in sabbath regulations. Jewish leaders had reduced their sabbath laws to a total of thirty-four. Under each of these thirty-four laws there were six divisions!

The feeling of some Jews toward the Sabbath was so strong that they would not defend themselves on the sabbath. Military enemies, knowing this about the Jews, sometimes attacked on the sabbath, knowing the Jews would not resist.

The Pharisees' concept of faith centered in the word "ritual." As long as they did the right thing at the right time, they felt themselves to be orthodox and acceptable to God. Jesus taught that man's highest expression of faith was not in ritual but in service. The sabbath as an institution should not receive top priority. The sabbath was made for man, not vice versa.

The conflict in 3:1–6 stems from the same source. Their beliefs were so distorted that they held institutions to be of greater worth than persons. In verse 4 Jesus asked a question, which if

they had answered honestly, would have condemned them. Jesus called the man into the center of the crowd, and in the presence of all healed his withered hand.

In 3:6 we find the strange coalition of Pharisees and Herodians. Here and in Mark 12:13 are the only two references to this party. These politically oriented people were supporters of Herod the Great. Though he was half-Jew, he had an appointment from the Romans that gave him authority in that part of the Roman Empire. The Herodians wanted one of Herod's descendents in that position once more, that they might reap the benefits of a good working relationship with Rome.

Special points—The word which Jesus spoke in 2:2 was the gospel. It included his own identity and the fulfilment of the messianic promise.

Fasting has validity today when associated with supreme values. When preoccupied over the illness of a loved one, fasting comes easily. When we are wrapped up in spiritual concerns, the thought of food is secondary. Fasting today should be Christ honoring, not for promotion of self.

Truth for today—In the emphasis on forgiveness in 2:1–12, we must keep in mind the obligation both to forgive and receive forgiveness. These are equally difficult.

The incident in 2:15 f. points up an aspect of Christian responsibility. We are responsible to those considered to be outcasts from society. They are sometimes well-to-do, like these publicans, as well as the economically disadvantaged.

In 2:21–22 Jesus sounded a relevant warning. We can be so wrapped up in the system that we lose sight of our purpose. We must remember that there is never any finality in the system or the methods. There is finality in our message, but the new wine will not long be contained in old wineskins. The wineskins of method are easily antiquated. We must remain willing to let the system go, but preserve the new wine at all costs.

Popularity (Mark 3:7–19)

The passage—In 3:7–35 we see the ever-growing popularity of Jesus. This interesting section reveals certain responses to the ministry of Jesus. Because of the tremendous throng of people, it was necessary to get into the boat and push out a little way into the Sea of Galilee. Though the Pharisees had established their opposition to him, it is obvious in verses 7–11 that the common people loved him and followed him.

In 3:13–19 is found a response from those called to be apostles. This significant moment in the earthly ministry of Jesus required withdrawal from the multitudes. Luke's Gospel adds the interesting sidelight that Jesus spent a night in prayer before selecting the twelve.

In 3:14 it is said that Jesus "ordained" these men. The word is better rendered "made." It does not involve ordination in the modern sense, with a special service to which all church members are invited. It would appear obvious that Jesus related some of the costs involved and the sacrifice they would be called upon to make.

There is a good possibility that the number "twelve" is significant. The number could symbolically refer to the twelve tribes of Old Testament times.

Much has been said regarding the difficulty in correlating the names of these men by the lists that appear in different places. These men are named in four separate New Testament passages, with one name appearing differently three times. Some suggest there must have been more than twelve men, others insist the lists are not accurate, but it is both reasonable and possible for one man to have been known by three separate names.

**The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). Mark 3:1-19. Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan.**

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