*DAILY DEVOTIONAL*

February 27 – March 4

“The Life of Jesus: Calling Disciples”

**Monday, February 27 Matthew 4:18-22**

*“Follow me”*

 Jesus’ strategy was to develop a disciple community, to call a group of associates who would be with him and learn from him. A disciple is one who both identifies with and learns from his master. Jesus began by calling Peter and Andrew, a report which is here given very briefly. In the Gospel of John we learn that Andrew, who had been a disciple of John the Baptist, upon meeting Jesus, first went and found his brother, Simon, and brought him to Jesus (John 1:41-42). Jesus called them both to follow him as disciples.

 In his calling of Peter and Andrew, Jesus declared that he would make these fishermen fishers of people. Like the rabbis, Jesus trained disciples, but, unlike the rabbis, he called them not to be scholars but to be witnesses to God’s Kingdom. It is noteworthy that they dropped what they were doing and followed him. There was something magnetic and authoritative about the claims of Jesus Christ upon these men. Jesus next called the two brothers, James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were also fishermen, inviting them likewise to follow him.

*You have invited me to follow you, Lord, and I am your disciple. Amen.*

**Tuesday, February 28 Mark 2:13-17**

*“Levi got up and followed Jesus”*

 If the Jews of Jesus’ day ever held a contest to choose the most hated occupation, tax collectors would win hands down. Spiritually, they stood condemned as sinners because they made their fortunes by cheating, intimidating, and bribing. Socially, even though their money gave them luxury, their circles of friends extended no farther than their own kind. To everyone else, they had fallen off the bottom of the social scale because they functioned as hirelings of the despised Roman government for which they collected taxes.

 Why would Jesus call Levi to be a disciple? The truth is that Jesus specializes in seeing potential for spiritual growth and greatness in those that others have dismissed as being too spiritually or socially unfit for God’s Kingdom. After Levi leaves his tax office to follow Jesus, he invites his fellow tax collectors and other notorious sinners, the only friends he has, to celebrate his decision at a dinner. When the Pharisees object, Jesus states that he has come to bring a ministry of hope to undeserving people.

*The Good News, Lord, is that anyone can be your disciple. Amen.*

**Wednesday, March 1 Luke 6:12-16**

*“He chose twelve of them”*

 Luke tells us that Jesus went to the hills to pray and prayed all night. How do you spend all night with God? Perhaps by simply being there, rejoicing, crying, talking, and listening. Jesus prayed all night, and on the following day God gave him a family of twelve. God wants to give us a family of people who believe in us, pray for us, and hold us accountable. Remember, Jesus chose twelve disciples, and one of them was Judas. That raises the interesting point that Judas was an answer to prayer.

 Jesus has many more disciples than these twelve, but he decides to make them his primary followers by designating them as apostles which literally means “sent ones.” His selection is preparation for the mission to come in which they are sent out to minister in Jesus’ name (see Luke chapter nine), as well as anticipation of his future return into heaven. All but Judas Iscariot will come to have a central role in the development of the early church. Listed first is Peter who will often speak for the disciples and who will have a key role in the group.

*Thank you, Lord, for the family of believers in which you have placed me. Amen.*

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**Thursday, March 2 John 1:43-51**

 *“Jesus found Philip”*

 Jesus sought out Philip who came from the same city as Andrew and Peter. It is interesting that there should be a cluster of followers from the same community, and as Jesus ministry unfolds much of it is centered in this city named Bethsaida. Philip seems to have been an average kind of person, at times in over his head. When Jesus asked him about feeding the five thousand, his answer was that there was very little money on hand, not even enough to buy a small amount for each one (John 6:5-6). And later when the Greeks come seeking Jesus, they first go to Philip, but he seems to be caught off guard, hardly knowing what to do, so he brings them to Thomas (John 12:21).

 Yet Jesus singles Philip out and goes after him, an ordinary person like so many of us. Jesus invites him, “follow me,” and Philip accepts on the spot. Immediately “Philip found Nathaniel” and shares with him about Jesus. Jesus invites Philip who in turn invites Nathaniel. Evangelistic outreach in Jesus’ name has begun.

*You have found me, Lord, and I have begun to share you with others. Amen.*

**Friday, March 3 John 6:60-71**

*“Many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him”*

 The casual, superficial disciples, those who have not counted the cost, find what Jesus has said to be too hard for them. The truth is always hard for those of us who thought Jesus would settle for less than he demands. It is not that the saying is hard to understand, but that our unbelieving hearts reject what he asks of us. If the acts and teachings of Jesus thus far offend these loosely attached disciples, what will happen when he comes to the climax of his ministry – being crucified and resurrected and ascending to heaven “where he was before” (verse 62)?

 Here is the first mention of “the twelve” in this Gospel. Is this the time of their being chosen? Are they being given to Jesus by the Father here? They have seen him welcome the crowd and feed them, have experience the guarantee of his eternal presence in the stormy night at sea, and then have watched the easy starters leave. Jesus asks whether they also want to leave. This is the time to decide! It is Peter who speaks for all of them. There is no one else to whom they can go. They know there is eternal life in his words.

*As your disciple, Lord, I will do what you ask of me. Amen.*

**Saturday, March 4 John 10:22-30**

*“My sheep hear my voice”*

 Jesus has been at work since his baptism presenting the evidence of his messiahship. He has stepped into numerous Jewish settings – from weddings to festivals – attempting to persuade his audience of his relationship with the Father. He has demonstrated this relationship through the wisdom of his words as well as through his miracles. While some have come to faith, the leadership of Jerusalem has failed to accept him. They have not embraced him as Messiah, having thus become “false shepherds” whose voices are not to be followed.

 Jesus’ sheep, however, hear his voice and follow him. He has shared his abundant and eternal life with them so they will never perish. And no enemy, however strong he may seem, can snatch any of the sheep from Jesus’ hand, because his Father, who has given them to the Good Shepherd, is greater than all enemies. The mighty sign of that holding power will be Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. To be kept in Jesus’ hand is to be held by the Father’s hand, for they are One.

*Let me hear your voice clearly, Lord, so I may follow you alone. Amen.*