

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Common Men, Uncommon Calling: James, Simon and Judas

Scripture: Luke 6:15-16

Code: 42-80

We're having a great time in the biographies of the 12 Apostles and I would ask you to open your Bible to Luke chapter 6. In our study of Luke we have slowed down to snail's pace in chapter 6 because here we have in verses 14 through 16 the names of the 12 Apostles. We don't want to just run by those names as if they were inconsequential or unimportant because in fact they're not. These are the 12 official representatives that Jesus called to be the first generation of preachers of the gospel and to spread the truth around the world. They will later be given power over the physical world in terms of disease and death, power over the spiritual world in terms of demons, in order to authenticate their ministry. They will some day reign over the 12 tribes of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom and in the New Jerusalem, the capital city of the new heaven and new earth in the eternal state, each of their names will be on the foundations of the 12 gates that enter into that city. These are extremely important men in the big picture of God's purpose, redemptive purpose in the world.

And yet it is remarkable how little is said about them on the pages of Scripture. We want to ring out of what we know all that we can so that we can have some biographical information about them which we have been finding to be extremely encouraging, very encouraging. I think we'll find that again as we come to the final group of four. We're going to look at three of the four. We've already gone through group one, Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John. Group Two, Philip, Bartholomew, or Nathanael, and Matthew and Thomas. And now we come to the last four, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who became a traitor.

I told you there were four lists of Apostles in the Bible, the New Testament...Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts. In all four lists the 12 names are given, Peter is always the first name, all the other names always are in their group...group one's always the same, group two and group three, indicating that they were little clans of Apostles that sort of hung together within the greater group of 12. And there is a decreasing intimacy with Jesus. Group one is very intimate with Jesus. Group two a little less intimate. Group three, seeming to be distant from Jesus, particularly, of course, Judas Iscariot who was an unbeliever. And we'll leave Judas for next Lord's day, the greatest tragedy of all of human life, and that will be a riveting and compelling study.

But for this morning, I want us to look at these three in group four...James the son of Alphaeus, Simon called the Zealot, Judas the son of James.

Now it's always a challenge for the preacher to handle the Word of God accurately, but it's especially challenging for the preacher to preach on people about whom nothing is said. This is the greatest of all challenges and I am amazed how I can find things to say about people about which nothing has been said. So that's what we're going to do this morning, so hold on, I think you're going to be fascinated by the biography.

A great English Christian by the name of Henry Drummond(?) long ago was addressing the elite West End Club of London. And he made a famous statement that has kind of bounced through history. He said this, "Ladies and Gentlemen, the entrance fee into the Kingdom of Heaven is nothing, but the annual subscription is everything." And if there's anything that defines the Apostles, it's everything. They understood what it was to give up everything. Whatever their life was before they were called the Apostles of Jesus Christ, it came to a screeching and final end, it was over. They gave up everything.

And in the story that we see in the gospel record, the Apostles, of course, played a wonderful role in giving color to the accounts of the life of Jesus, but they are not really major role players. We see them sometimes manifesting doubt and disbelief and confusion. We see them sometimes speaking more highly of themselves than they ought to speak, putting more confidence in their abilities and their strength than they ought to have had. So we see their foibles.

But actually in the gospel record there are very, very few manifestations of some great act by any Apostle. The sort of best that we get is Peter asking profound questions and then giving profound responses to the Lord's answer which are directly from the Holy Spirit through him. The one time it looks like Peter might do a formidable act, walk on water, he gets his eyes off the Lord and begins to sink. So we're not looking at men who in any sense can be logged in as heroes in the gospel record. Their heroism really plays out after Jesus goes back to heaven, sends the Holy Spirit, empowers them and then you begin to see something of their heroics in the book of Acts, although primarily all you find there is Peter, John and Paul. The rest of them go on into obscurity. But we do know they were used in a mighty way to carry the gospel of Jesus Christ to various parts of the world. There is some history and tradition that indicates that for us.

So when you think of the Apostles, you don't need to think about heroic people. Primarily the gospel record is the record of their training. And they really didn't get dispatched until just prior to the ascension of Jesus, after His resurrection, Acts 1 says, He taught them for 40 days, things pertaining to the Kingdom, filled in their education, gave them the last semester of their training. And then went to heaven, then sent the Holy Spirit, then they went out and then the Day of Pentecost launched the church and the preaching began to spread around the world.

So what we find in these Apostles in the gospel record is pretty much training. And when you get to the book of Acts, the record is limited to just a few of the Apostles, of course, Paul wasn't even among the original 12 and so most of their ministry is obscure to us now, the record is crystal clear in heaven, it wasn't given to us on earth.

But what then do we learn from the Apostles. Well I think the main lesson that I want you to get out of these biographies is that the Lord uses all kinds of weak and common people. Because if there's any thread that weaves its way through all of these lives, it is the commonality of these people. They are the commonest of the common. Just the kind of people the Lord can use.

Now I want to give a little general look at them so that there's a sort of framework for understanding where they were spiritually. Turn in your Bible to John 6 for a moment. And this provides a good illustration of the spiritual work that had been done in their hearts. Jesus had a lot of followers. He had thousands of followers. He had massive crowds attracted by the miracles, attracted by His power over demons, His power over disease, and even His teaching. And He was drawing tremendous crowds. So many people were around Him that it became very difficult for Him to function. Sometimes He had to get into a boat and go off into the water just to keep the pressure of the crowd from pushing Him into the ground. There were many, many times when He had to find solace and quiet in a mountain place, a hidden place to get away from the crowds that surrounded Him.

The crowd in its broadest context was drawn by the miracles, drawn by the signs and the wonders, the likes of which the world had never seen. And so there was an immense amount of popularity that was being generated by Jesus' great supernatural power.

And when this large crowd came, Jesus taught them and as He taught them on a regular basis He thinned out the crowd. They were enamored with His miracles and His power, especially in John 6, He had just fed them, He fed literally thousands of people, somewhere between 20 and 30 thousand people, totally created food for them from the loaves and the fish. And they showed up the next morning for a free breakfast, so they were attracted by that. They thought He would be a perfect Messiah, He could create a welfare state where nobody needed to get food any longer, He would just make it every day. And so they were drawn by those kinds of things.

But Jesus then would speak to them and as He taught them, He thinned out the crowd by saying things that they weren't really willing to accept. This is one of those occasions. Jesus was teaching here in the synagogue in Capernaum. And He was saying essentially, and these are familiar words, back in verse 53, "You have to eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood." Now that is not a statement of cannibalism, that is simply saying you must literally take in to you all that I am. You have to accept Me in total for who I am. And He repeats that down through verse 58. And if you don't do that, if you don't take Me in completely, all that I am in My humanness, and in My deity, and

in My sacrifice, if you're not willing to embrace all that I am, then you're not going to have the life of God in you. This is what He was teaching.

Well verse 60, "Many therefore of His disciples," that's learners, mathetes, this is the big group, not the 12, just the big group of learners, "when they heard this said this is a difficult statement, who can listen to this? We just frankly can't buy this. We cannot come to the place where Henry Drummond was speaking where we're willing to say we're to give everything to Jesus. This idea of total submission is not acceptable to us. Not acceptable."

Verse 61, "Jesus conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, they were having a very hard time swallowing the idea that they literally had to totally submit to every element within the person and work of Jesus Christ. It was really more of a commitment than they were interested in making. Food, free food okay, miracles okay, deliverance from demons fine, overthrow Rome fine, but don't go beyond that."

Well, He went way beyond that and talked about loving God, obeying God, obeying Him, taking in His Word, believing it, living it. And so their response was to grumble. They said, "This is a difficult statement." That's the word hard, it's the Greek word skleros, from which we get sclerosis which is a hardening. It means something dried out, something hard, something stiff. And they were just saying...it's just too hard to swallow, we just aren't willing to make that kind of full submission.

And He knows it because He's conscious of them and they're grumbling and He said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?" Now to help you a little bit with the word "stumble," it is essentially the word skandalizae, does this scandalize you, does it seriously offend you? Skandalizae came from a crooked stick that was used with bait to trap an animal and then kill the animal. The sticks would be arranged in such a way that when the animal came in for the bait, it knocked the sticks down, the sticks clamped down on the animal and took its life. Jesus is saying, "So, do these words kill any possibility of a future relationship? You're all grumbling because what I said in a sense is a death-mill(?) to our relationship, is that it?"

Verse 62, "What then if you should behold the Son of Man ascending where He was before?" Now what He is saying there is, you don't believe I came down from heaven, would you believe that I had come down from heaven if I went back? If I go back into heaven, which He did in His ascension, will you then believe that I came from heaven? And that points up the fact that they didn't believe He was from heaven. They believed He was a prophet or was a great teacher, or was some kind of man of God, some kind of miracle worker, but they did not believe that He was God from heaven incarnate and therefore they weren't willing to completely embrace Him. There were lots of teachers that they were attached to, associated with and subject to.

In verse 63 He says, "It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh profits nothing. The words which I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life." What He's doing is picking up on this eating His flesh and drinking His blood analogy and saying if you don't take Me in, and that is all My words, everything I say about Myself, everything I teach, if you don't take it in, you don't have truth and you don't have life. So if you refuse to believe that I came down from heaven when I said I came down from heaven, then you don't have life.

And He says in verse 64, "There are some of you who don't believe. I mean, you like the miracles, you like the free food, the rest of it, but you do not believe that I came down from heaven, would you believe if I went back into heaven? We'll find out." Because that's what He did. Would you believe then? You're grumbling because you don't believe.

Well Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who didn't believe and He even knew who it was that would betray Him. He knew Judas, Judas was in that large group of disciples. And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it's been granted him from the Father." Only God can turn your heart and bring you to belief. Only a sovereign God can do a work in your heart. You have to be open to that work but that is a work of God. "I've been giving you...I've been giving you truth, I've been offering you life, I've been offering you Myself and you refuse to believe. And you can't do it on your own, only God can do it." So Jesus even acknowledges this is a sovereign work of God which doesn't dispossess the sinner of responsibility but points out that the sinner left to himself is never going to come to faith.

Well verse 66 is a result, "Many of His disciples withdrew, were not walking with Him anymore." So He was just thinning out the crowd. He didn't need all the miracle seekers. He just wanted the people who truly loved Him, who truly ate and drank with Him, who truly submitted totally to Him. And so that famous statement in verse 67, He said to the 12, now He identifies the 12 who are among this larger group, and He says, "You do not want to go away also, do you? I mean, you're not like the rest, are you?" I mean, He knew the answer to that but He wanted to elicit from them the confession...Simon Peter answering, speaking on behalf of all of them, that's why plural pronouns are used, "Lord, to whom shall we go, you have words of eternal life and we have believed and have come to know that You are the holy One of God." So I'm only pointing out, by the time they were duly constituted as the 12, they had come to believe that Jesus was the holy One of God. So they were believers and they had come to the point where though the entrance fee was nothing, the annual subscription was everything. They had come in by grace through faith and now were willing to give up everything. They weren't going to go away.

And then just to clarify that it wasn't completely the 12, verse 70 and 71, "Jesus answered them, 'Did I Myself not choose you the 12 and yet one of you is a devil.' Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the 12, was going to betray Him." So Jesus identified that there is one in the 12 who is a traitor.

So what we find here, with the exception of Judas then, is you have a believing group of men. These 12, and perhaps others, but these 12 for certain, with the exception of Judas, have made an affirmation of their faith in Christ and now when He directly says to them, "Do you want to go away because you don't want this total commitment that I'm asking?" they said, "Absolutely not, absolutely not, we know that You alone have the words of eternal life, and we believe and have come to know that You're the holy One of God."

So I just want you to know that the Apostles, with the exception of Judas then, were true believers. They made the break with the past permanently, they were now following Jesus and they had been called to the highest calling that any humans were ever called to, that is to Apostleship, to become not learners anymore, but preachers, the first generation of preachers and given the power to do wonders and miracles and signs. They were transformed to carry on the work of Christ. And what a remarkable group they were.

Go back to Luke, for a moment, and I remind you that the Lord uses all kinds of people. He can use dynamic strong bold leaders like Peter who take charge, initiate, plan, strategize, confront, command people who often talk a better life than they live and act too hastily and are eager to be forgiven and restored. And God can use the humble, gentle, inconspicuous souls like Andrew who speak no prominence, no individual attention, no crowds and are always quietly bringing people to Christ. He can use zealous, passionate, uncompromising, task-oriented, insensitive and ambitious men like James who see only the job to do and will die to get it done. And He can use the sensitive, loving, believing, intimate truth seekers like John who speaks the truth in love and attracts men to Christ by living an obedient life.

We have found that He can use skeptical, analytical, mechanical, slow to believe, slow witted, visionless, pessimistic, unsure people like Philip or a seeker of truth, honest, open, clear minded, meditative and deeply surrendered men like Nathanael/Bartholomew who have full faith and understanding, even though flawed by serious sin such as prejudice. And He can use an outcast, an extortioner, a tax collector, a traitor, the most hated of men like Matthew/Levi who knows that he's a sinner and seeks forgiveness and becomes a quiet, meek and humble man who won't even refer to himself in his entire gospel, other than to mention his conversion, a man who loves the riffraff and the outcasts and who has great faith in Christ and total surrender to His lordship. And He could even use, as we saw last week, heroic, courageous, doubters like Thomas.

Now we come to the last four and they have their own distinctions. Number nine in the full list is a man indicated to us in verse 15 by the name Simon...I'm sorry, James the son of Alphaeus, followed then by Simon...James the son of Alphaeus.

There's a famous line in the Apocrypha that says, "Let us now praise famous men." Well that's the world's perspective. I can promise you, James the son of Alphaeus would never be on Larry King Live. He would never be on a TV talk show, he would never be invited to endorse a book, he would never be asked to pray at a conference. He would never be featured in a Christian magazine interview. He is just very, very obscure...James the son of Alphaeus.

Now he had a name that was shared by some others. James the son of Zebedee who was the brother of John. And James is known to us and there are several incidents in the gospels where James appears. And then there was another James, the James the brother of our Lord. Our Lord had a half-brother born to Joseph and Mary by the name of James. He later became the leader of the Jerusalem Council and authored the epistle James. But this James, the son of Alphaeus, is just obscure. We don't even know anything about Alphaeus.

But interestingly enough were you to look at Mark 15:40 you would see him there called, "James the mikros, micro James, Little James." I think the NAS translates it "James the Less." Little James. Now what does it mean, mikros from which we get micro? Well he was little. Well in what way was he little? Well it could refer to his physical features, he could have been very small, just a little guy. And that's perhaps true. It may also be that he was young in age. It would be hard to imagine that were he an older man he would still be bearing the moniker "Little James." They may have wanted to show a little more deference to his age.

It is also true that he was something of a background person, and that's why he's called "Little James," or "James the Less," small James. Perhaps it's some kind of a combination of that, we certainly can't be dogmatic, but let's for our mind's sake assume that he was a kind of a small sort of quiet person. and Little James was probably his nickname in a word(??) beater in physical terms...but then our Lord has never depended upon superstars, have you noticed?

And, in fact, the New Testament tells us absolutely nothing about him. However, I have some things to say about him, sort of from the white spaces. His distinguishing mark then is his obscurity, right? If we don't know anything about him, that in itself is an interesting fact. Apparently he sought no recognition. He displayed no great leadership. Asked no critical questions. Demonstrated no unusual insight. Only his name remains and all his life and labors are sunk in obscurity.

Historical tradition tells us, however, that he was sent after Pentecost to Persia to preach the gospel, modern Iran. And there preached the gospel. The gospel was rejected by the power that was there and he was crucified for his faithfulness to Christ, just as his Lord had been crucified. The legacy for Iran was pagan Islam. The Lord uses people who seem not extraordinary at all. Here is such a quiet, unknown soldier.

I remember this, he became a great preacher, he was able to do miracles, cast out demons, heal people to validate the message that he preached. And he preached the message with faithfulness and God's Word never returns void, Isaiah says, so he bore fruit for his preaching. He was powerful enough to bring about his own martyrdom.

Now although Scripture doesn't say anything about him, I just want to introduce you to an interesting thought. In Mark chapter 2 verse 14, Jesus passes by the tax office of Levi/Matthew, whom we saw last time. And notice this, he saw Levi, the son of...whom?...who?...Alphaeus. Could it be that this James was the brother of Matthew? That could be. There is no effort on the part of the Scripture writer to distinguish between the two Alphaeuses, could be. That wouldn't be uncommon since Peter and Andrew were brothers and James and John were brothers. Why not these two? Why not James and Matthew/Levi?

There's another interesting thought, probably less likely but at least it peaks my curiosity. In the nineteenth chapter of John at the crucifixion of Jesus, there in verse 25, was standing by the cross of Jesus, His mother, Mary, His mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas," see that name Cleophas? Some scholars tell us that Cleophas is just another form of Alphaeus so that if this James was the son of the sister of Mary, he would have been Jesus' cousin. Well, was James the cousin of our Lord? Was he the brother of Matthew? We don't know. But you know something, it doesn't matter to the Lord. All of that really isn't important.

You see, and this is something you need to understand in this whole study, if it was really important to go through everybody's pedigree, it always makes me laugh, you know, when people in the ministry put their name and then the list of letters after their name, of all their pedigree, I wonder whether that's supposed to substitute for the power of God. That kind of stuff isn't really important. The Apostles never really were the true workers in the Kingdom, any way, Christ was, they were just the tools. Had they been really important and had their pedigree been important, had their methods been important, had their means been important, had their styles been important, had their careers been important, we would have some information. We sweep into the book of Acts, as I said, and we don't hear anything about them except for Peter, James and John. And Peter and John dominate the first part, and the Apostle Paul, the Apostle who came later, dominates the back half of the book of Acts.

So there isn't anything that we know about them. And the reason for that is that the men aren't the issue. We don't need, apparently the Lord knew, a biography of these men. It was enough to know that they were chosen by the Lord, empowered by the Spirit, and carried the gospel to the world of their day. And they just sort of disappear. And the Scripture always keeps the focus on the power of Christ and the power of the Word. They preach the Word filled with the Spirit and that's what you need to know. The vessel is not the issue, the Master is. So in a sense, James the son of Alphaeus was like the rest of the Apostles, he was harnessed to the Master's chariot, a slave of love. He lived only for His glory and died without leaving any earthly record. But believe me, there is a heavenly

record. He right now shines in heaven. His name right now is on the foundation of one of the gates that lead into the New Jerusalem.

Well, I hate to say anything more about someone about whom nothing is said. But to say the Lord uses obscure little unknown, unsung people who may have been able to claim that they were a brother of Matthew, or a cousin to Jesus, but didn't. And sought only the quiet place of unnoticed service, and yet were empowered by the Lord for the greatest task of all, the preaching of the gospel.

Number ten, the next one, back to Luke, fascinating man, Simon who was called the Zealot. Simon who was called the Zealot.

Now I want to help you with this one a little bit cause if you read Matthew and Mark and you see the lists of the Apostles, you're going to find him identified in a different way. In Matthew and Mark he is called Cananaen, C-a-n-a-n-a-e-n, Cananaen. Luke, zealot, Matthew and Mark, Cananaen...why do Matthew and Mark use Cananaen? Well the best ancient manuscripts read Cananios(?), and that is a word that actually comes from the Hebrew word, a Hebrew root that's carried over into the Greek word. The Hebrew word is qanah and it means "to be jealous," or "to be passionate, zealous." And it was used in the Hebrew language for those who were passionate and jealous and zealous for the law of God. That's cananios, the sort of derivative from the Hebrew word. Zelotesis the word for zeal in the Greek, and that's the word that appears here, zelotes from which we get Zealot. It's exactly the same word in Greek. So you have one Greek word coming from a Hebrew word, and you...a Hebrew root, and you have another word that is the one...it means the one who is jealous, or the one who is zealous.

Both words then refer to this man. He was a man who had zeal and passion, in particular for the Law of God. The terminology bears that out. Both words then indicate to us that he was a man clearly defined by one characteristic in his life, and that was this passion for the Law of God. In fact, here it is long after he was converted, long after he was an Apostle, and he is still called the Zealot, or the Cananaen. I mean, he bore the label all his life. I guess in a sense it was sort of like a head-shaker all the way to the very end...how in the world this guy ever got into the 12. It has nothing to do with geography, but it distinguishes Simon as a member of a jealous, radical, zealous, evolutionary party among the Jews.

There were primarily four parties among the Jews...there were the Pharisees, fastidious about the law, religious fundamentalists. There were the Sadducees, those are the ones who were the religious liberals. There were the Essenes and they were the monastics, they were the separated people who lived out in the desert and lived an austere life style and disdained the comforts of the city. They would be like Monks living in a monastery. The last, the fourth and last of the primary groups that developed was the Zealot group. And their particular bent was political. They hated the Romans. If you wanted to define a Zealot, you could say they hated anybody that imposed upon Judaism any

pagan intrusion. And the Romans, of course, were guilty of that. They hated the Romans. They hated the Greeks before them. They were, in fact, born out of rebellion, born really to be terrorists. They were the political terrorists. They were the assassins. Their existence appears to come from the Maccabean period when the Greeks were still leading and ruling over Israel. And the Jews were sick of it and tired of it, the temple had been desecrated, a pig had been slain on the altar to mock Judaism and its ceremonial laws.

And there was a Maccabean revolution, as you know. First Maccabees 2:50 says, "Be zealous for the Law and give your lives for the covenant." And so there was this calling together of Jews who would go and die to dispossess the pagans who had occupied their land. They were the strictest of the strict. They were really extreme Pharisees of the Pharisees who went to the point where they not only interpreted the Law literally, but they believed that somebody who didn't interpret the Law the way it should be interpreted and didn't live by that Law could be killed, assassinated. They insisted on a literal obligation of traditional renderings of the Law. They wanted a Messiah who would kick out the Romans and every other pagan nation and who would restore the Kingdom to Israel with all its former Solomonic or Davidic glory. They were red-hot patriots and they banded together under a man named Judas of Zamala(?) to deliver the Jews from the Romans. They literally started a rebellion and some of their crimes were quite amazing.

They were headquartered in the Galilee where the rest of the Apostles with the exception of Judas was from. Their headquarters were in Galilee, they stirred up sedition. They did terrorist acts everywhere. Josephus, the historian, that writes so vastly of that day and with such great help, gives us a brief look at them. I'll kind of run down through some of the things he tells us.

The land of Israel was under Roman rule. And, of course, the Jews couldn't accept that fact, the country was a sleeping volcano about to erupt. They wanted the Romans out. They offended them in every sense. For many years Herod the Great who was not a Jew but an Idumaeen had succeeded in holding the nation together in peace. He did it by the sheer force of his personality and his skill and diplomacy as well as being backed, of course, by Roman force. It was 4 B.C. when Herod the Great died. Divided up his kingdom to his sons, Philip took the north-east regions, Antipas took Galilee, Archelaus was left Judea and Samaria. Before this new arrangement ever could be ratified by Rome, Israel erupted. They wanted all the Gentile rulers out and the Romans out. The blaze was the fiercest in Galilee where this Judas of Samala led the insurrection.

The Roman power broke that insurrection, but the Zealots were all the more fortified. In the south, in Judea the Romans found Archelaus was unfit to rule so they replaced him with a man named Coponius (probably Coponius). Now Coponius is well noted because he introduced a census, you remember that? That's when Jesus was born at that time, when they went down, Joseph and Mary, to the census to record their identity beyond the tax rolls. He introduced a census for taxation, that was another terrible act as far as the Zealots were concerned and so a holy war blew up again led by

Judas of Samaria. The revolt again was crushed by the Romans and this time Judas was killed, but the Zealots were even fortified more and they stopped with the open-rebellion and they moved to terrorism. They became known as Zachareai(???), secha(?) a little curved sword and they would hide it in the folds of their robe and they would come up upon the Romans and stab them in the back of the ribs through the heart.

They involved themselves in guerilla warfare, burning, plundering and going up into Galilee to hide. And sometimes even killed their own countrymen whom they believed compromised with Rome. But Josephus in his Antiquities of the Jews writes concerning this Judas of Samaria who was the leader of these rebellions and sort of out of which the Zealots were fortified. He said, "Judas the Galilean was the author of the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy." He gives him some credit for really defining this group. "They, the Zealots, have an inviolable attachment to liberty and say that God is the only ruler and Lord. They do not mind dying any kind of death, nor do they heed the torture of their kindred and their friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man lord. And since this immovable resolution of theirs is known to a great many, I shall speak no further about that matter, for I'm not afraid that anything that I have said about them will be disbelieved, but rather fear that what I said comes short of the resolution they show when they undergo pain," end quote.

Josephus says all they need to say is very little because everybody knows these people are so zealous they will literally die and if the people around them that are in their group fall at their side, that does not at all mitigate their resolution. They don't mind dying, he says, any kind of death, nor do they heed the torture of their kindred and their friends. You can torture them. You can kill them. But you can't change their passion.

Simon was one of them. In fact, there are historians who believe in 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, Titus Vespasian, the Roman general, when they destroyed Jerusalem and massacred a million to a hundred thousand Jews in Jerusalem in that one terrible holocaust, that it was largely participated by the Zealots. Let me read you what one historian says, "When Jerusalem was besieged and when the inhabitants were slowly starving to death, and when the outlook was completely hopeless, within the besieged city a civil war was raging and the Zealots and the assassins, who were a part of the Zealots, were murdering anyone who suggested a more moderate policy, or who was prepared to come to terms before ultimate ruin engulfed the city. The Zealots and the Assassins were crazed with hatred for the Romans and for anyone who had anything to do with the Romans. It was their insane hatred of Rome which in the end destroyed their city."

I mean, when a Roman army moved in and besieged the city, what they did was cut off all the supplies so they began to starve the people out. That's how sieges used to work in the ancient world. That's how you defeated a city. You just surrounded the thing and in its grasp the city's supplies were cut off, the people began to starve to death and as they began to starve to death, they would come to a negotiating position. And when you got them into a position of weakness, this would be like we

would call "cold war power," when they knew they were on the edge of total defeat, they would then negotiate some kind of truce.

Well there were people in Jerusalem who wanted to do that to save their lives, the Zealots wouldn't allow it. They actually killed the Jews who wanted to negotiate and as a result, wound up getting their entire city destroyed and the population massacred.

Josephus writes, "Zealots, for that was the name those reckless persons went by, as if they were zealous in good practices and were not rather extravagant and reckless in the worst actions." Here is Josephus even saying their zeal was ill-conceived.

He goes on, "Nothing shows that fanaticism of the Zealots better than the incident in which the last of them finally perished. When Jerusalem fell, some strongholds in the city still held out. The last of them was outside the city in a place called Massada(?)," you remember that? Herod's summer palace down in the south, part of the desert. I've been there a few times. "There a group of Jews commanded by Eleazar held out. When it was clear that all hope of escape was gone, Eleazar summoned the Jews together, made a flaming speech in which he urged them first to slaughter their own wives and children, then to commit suicide. They took him at his word. They tenderly embraced their wives...writes Josephus...kissed their children and then began the bloody work. Nine-hundred and sixty perished, only two women and five children escaped by hiding in a cave," end quote.

They were so zealous they literally killed their families, rather than be taken by the Romans. This is Simon. Now think about Simon having to hang around Matthew who had sold himself to Rome to extort taxes out of Israel, who was the most hated and despised of all people in that society because he was a Roman tax collector who betrayed his people and aided and abetted the pagan invader. He would just as soon stuck his little knife in the heart of Matthew outside this shadow of Christ in which he had wonderfully come.

It's amazing, isn't it, that Jesus would pick a man like this, a terrorist, a man of fierce loyalties, a man of amazing passion, courage and zeal, narrow for sure, enthusiastic to a fault, a man of action, loyal, savage. The Lord chose him. J.G. Greenhow(?) writes, "Were men divided from each other by a wide, deep gulf of thought and feeling and even of impassion and hatred, yet the Publican and the Zealot clasped hands," referring to Matthew and Simon, "and they joined hearts at Jesus' feet. In the furnace of His love these opposites were welded together. It was a picture and prediction on a small scale of what would come to pass in the greater church, where walls of partition were to be broken down, where national antipathies were to be crucified and buried with Christ and rise again transfigured into the glory of the uniting faith and charity and where there were to be neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free but Christ all and in all." Beautifully said.

And think of him in relationship to Judas Iscariot. Judas wanted money. Judas wanted power. Judas wanted the Jewish kingdom, he wanted the Romans out. Simon must have been comfortable hanging around Judas because Judas was a materialist, Judas was looking at the political implications of Jesus' messiahship. He betrayed Jesus in the end because it became clear to him that the thing wasn't going the way he thought it was supposed to go and his thoughts would have been that it would go in the same place that Simon would have thought originally that it should go, the dispossession of the Romans, the freedom of Israel. I suppose in some ways Simon could have been the betrayer. He was even more passionate about those things than Judas.

But Simon believed the truth. And the fiery enthusiasm that he had for Israel was turned to Christ. I wonder if when he preached he ever gave testimonies about his background. It would be interesting. Oh he did preach. Eusebius, the church historian, says he preached in the British Isles, in Egypt and in Africa. And finally because of his preaching, they sawed him in half. And I'm sure if he was willing to die for political aspirations and the love of Judaism, he was even more willing to die for spiritual aspirations and the love of Christ, huh?

There's one other for this morning in this list, verse 16, "Judas, the son of James." Too bad he had that name. In those days it wasn't because it means "Jehovah leads...Jehovah leads." What a nice name for your child. But, you know what?, there's one Judas that's messed it up for everybody. This is a good one. Now again I don't know a lot about this guy but everything I can find about him I really...I'm really drawn to him. He had three names. Jerome called him "Trinominus(??)", the man with three names. If you look at Matthew 10:3 he's called Thaddaeus and also in Matthew 10:3 "Lebbaeus," L-e-b-b-a-e-u-s. Thaddaeus Lebbaeus Judas son of James...a lot of names.

Now the name "Judas" was his name from birth that his parents gave him, Jehovah leads...wonderful, wonderful name. And I'm sure the parents were anticipating that in his life God would lead him and he would follow. It was a great, great thing for Hebrew parents to give to this little Jewish baby.

But his other names are really kind of interesting and probably got added on and maybe became, I don't know, sort of nicknames that he accumulated. Thaddaeus, you know what Thaddaeus means? Breast child...that's what it means. The Hebrew root has to do with a female breast nursing. Now, I mean, I basically would interpret that as "Mamma's boy," wouldn't you? I mean, that's not a stretch, is it? You'd think a long time before you named your kid "Mamma's Boy." Maybe he was the littlest guy, maybe he was the last in a long line of kids, and especially devoted and cherished by his mom. And his other name Lebbaeus is a Hebrew word that means "heart child." This is a little tender, heart, mamma's boy, hanging around Simon the Zealot. This has got to be interesting stuff. A tender-hearted, sympathetic, compassionate, gentle but courageous...can the Lord use? Sure, Zealots make great preachers and so do tender-hearted, compassionate, gentle, sweet-spirited, mammas' boys.

It's really an interesting group, isn't it? There's sort of one of each. Now I wish we knew more about this guy with all the names. But he's wrapped in some obscurity. But as I've been saying with all of them, don't let that obscurity cloud your respect for them. They became mighty preachers. These men will never make it into the earthly Hall of Fame, but believe me, they lead the parade in heaven. And their humble service is unrecorded by men but it is recorded by God. They are well-known in heaven and in the heavenly record.

We have one incident with this Judas Thaddaeus Lebbaeus. Turn to John 14 and we won't need to go back to Luke 6, so you can just turn over to John 14. This is really interesting. Just one little glimpse of this man...it shows his obscurity.

Verse 22, John 14, "Judas, not Iscariot," how would you like to be known all your life by who you're not? I'm sure he was pretty commonly saying, "I'm Judas, not Iscariot." He's..."Judas, not Iscariot, said to Jesus, 'Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?'" This is just...this supports the idea this is a very tender-hearted man. He doesn't say anything brash or bold or confident. He doesn't confront the Lord and rebuke him like Peter. There's just a gentleness and a meekness and a kind of tenderness in the question. He just...and this is the only incident he ever appears in the whole of the gospels. And he just says, "What happened that we know You, but the rest of the world doesn't know You? What happened?"

There's a gentleness there. I mean, "We all kind of followed with great expectation, You are the Savior of the world, the holy One of God, You come down to set your Kingdom up and You're preaching the good news of forgiveness and salvation and this is good news for the world and we know that. And we know that and we know...but nobody knows that. So what's happened that You're going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?"

This is a pious, believing disciple. This is a man who loves his Lord and this is a man who feels the power of salvation in his life and he's...he's full of the hope for the world and he...in his sort of, I guess, typical tender-hearted, heart-child, mamma's-boy kind of way he just says..."What happened? You're the King of the world but the world doesn't know that. You're the Savior of the world, the world doesn't know that. Why...why can we understand and we can see but nobody else can see? How are You going to save the world if they don't know You? Surely this is the time, I mean, let's...don't You think maybe this is a good time to make Yourself known to everybody?" Sort of like, "Could you go for it now?"

I think there's still that hope that the Kingdom is going to come. Jesus' answer is so marvelous, and I will always be grateful to JTL, we'll call him, for asking this great question because of the answer. "Jesus answered and said to him," and the answer is as tender as the question. "If anyone loves Me, he'll keep My Word, My Father will love him, we will come to him, make our abode with him." JTL, He

says, "Look, you don't have to worry about it, you don't have to worry about it. The Kingdom can't be known to anybody who doesn't love Me. But when somebody loves Me and keeps My Word, My Father will love him and we will come to him and the Kingdom will come to the heart of that person."

That's the answer. What a great statement. His question was still sort of in the political realm, sort of in the material realm. You know, how come You haven't taken over the world yet? "I'm not going to take over the world externally, I'm going to take over hearts, one at a time. And if anybody loves Me, he'll keep My Word. And if he keeps My Word, My Father will come to him and together we'll set up the Kingdom in his heart." What an answer.

Verse 24 gives the other side. "He who doesn't love Me doesn't keep My Words and the Word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me." It's just the question of loving Me. Jesus' answer is marvelous. We can be everlastingly grateful to Thaddaeus Judas for eliciting the response. It's not an obscure answer, it's a profound direct answer. "I can only reveal Myself to a loving, obedient, believing heart."

It's the same today, isn't it? People say, "Well, I don't..I don't understand the gospel, I don't understand about Christ, I'm not interested in that." Well, it's not so much more information they need, there is certainly a minimum amount of information you need. It's a question of loving Him which is tantamount to believing in Him, trusting in Him as Lord and Savior. The only eyes it will ever see and the only ears it will ever hear are those composed of loving obedience...loving obedience. Paul said, "If our gospel is veiled, it's veiled to them that are perishing cause the god of this world has blinded their minds and they can't see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ." That's the problem. They must come to see the reality of Christ and to love Him. And if they're unwilling to do that, there will be no Kingdom of God in their heart. What a great answer JTL got.

By the way, there's some traditional history that says he became known for healing many people of many diseases in his apostolic ministry and preaching. And there's some history that records that he healed a man named Adgar, A-d-g-a-r, who was a king of Syria as he was preaching, healing. And this man who was healed by Judas son of James became such a devout Christian that his apostate nephew captured Judas son of James, Thaddaeus, Lebbaeus, and killed him, murdered him for the gospel. So he may have been a mamma's boy but he had a heart of courage. Don't ever underestimate tender people.

And by the way, throughout history there is a symbol identified with him as an apostle. Sometimes when you see an old historical records, Judas son of James, there's a symbol associated with his name and it is a huge club, like a baseball bat. And the reason is, that was what they used to kill him.

So what kind of people does the Lord use? Just about every kind you can imagine and called these men to the highest calling out of their obscurity. And, folks, what's encouraging about that is that this

is us, isn't it? This is who we are. The Lord can use us in a mighty way and then He gets all the glory because we can't be the explanation for any spiritual success.

Lord, as we complete our time of worship this morning, we certainly are grateful for the refreshing, encouraging and wonderful insights You give us into these men. How wonderful it is that You use us and this is just an amazing list of different kinds of people, all preachers of Your great gospel, all witnesses, all empowered with the truth and the Spirit to preach mighty sermons and do mighty works. What an amazing assortment. In the end, none of them is an explanation for their power or their preaching, only You are. Your truth and Your Spirit make the useless useful and elevate the lowly to places of eternal glory. We thank You for the testimony of these men and may they serve as an example for us to be faithful, and never underestimate what You can do with each of us. We thank You for this great testimony and hope that we might be useful to You, in Christ's name. Amen.

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