

Scripture Reading:

Luke 6:12 “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. 13 And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: 14 Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew; 15 Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called the Zealot; 16 Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor. 17 And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, 18 as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. 19 And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all.”

Being a Disciple or a Spectator

This morning we will discuss choices: Some choices that the Lord made, some choices that we must make and how we find assurance in them!

At the center of verses 12 through 19 is the account of Jesus choosing twelve Apostles from among His many disciples. I have included in the order of worship some food for thought on the importance of the number twelve and information on the twelve chosen as Apostles... Your homework for this week!

On either side of selecting the Apostles we have Jesus in prayer and Luke again discussing the crowds around Jesus as he prepares to review our Lord’s teachings in the Sermon on the Mount which we will begin next week. My task this morning is to point out a pair of lessons from each of these that will prayerfully help us to be faithful disciples rather than just spectators in Christ’s Kingdom!

First let’s dig into verse 12: “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.”

The first lesson should be obvious: When Jesus is preparing to make a significant decision on who were to be Apostles, He spent the night in prayer: It should and must remind us about how important our selection of leaders is here at Church of the King: As we grow and we bring others forward to present as Elders or Deacons, it falls to you as the members of Church of the King to decide if they should be installed to those offices. This is NOT something that should be taken lightly, and Jesus gives us the example to follow here in this account: Such matters require much prayer.

The second lesson is to see the significance and mystery of the Creator / creature distinction as we witness the Incarnate Son of God who has come in the flesh, spending a night in prayer. God is God and we are mere creatures: We must learn to marvel at the fact that God has communicated to us at all, while not demanding more than we can or should understand as creatures.

We know that the Eternal Triune God has sovereign control over all of His creation: At the same time we know that He has made man in His image with minds that can reason and wills that can make choices. Even if we were not a fallen race, we would still be creatures and we see a glimpse of what this means as we see Jesus spending ALL night in prayer.

We don't know exactly what He prayed so we should not speculate, but the prayers that are revealed in John 17 at the Last Supper and then in the Garden of Gethsemane give us some good insights into how Jesus communed with His Father in prayer.

The bottom-line is that we should be BOTH inspired and humbled by this example of prayer that we see in our Lord and remember the wonder of this when we ponder the great mysteries of our salvation – more on this in a moment.

Jesus comes down in the morning and calls His disciples around Him in order to choose from among them twelve to serve as His Apostles.

As I mentioned, I have compiled their names, what the Bible says about them and some brief traditions that are widely accepted but not confirmed by the Word.

As we have in many cases: What we know and what we think we know!

There are many lessons that could be drawn from these verses, and much of that will be your homework:

- **Please review with your children how Jesus selected very humble men with little education to lead His Church: Have them memorize the first two columns! [Also look up the examples of 12's]**
- **Our fathers should be inspired and challenged by the many references, for good and ill, of who fathered most of the Apostles.**
- **We should also note that all but one faced a martyr's death.**

However, the two lessons that I want to focus on come from the selection of Judas Iscariot as an Apostle. It takes us back again to that mysterious interaction between God's sovereign control and man's ability or will to choose. Jesus has just spent the entire night in prayer: He has many faithful disciples to choose from among – Seventy were sent out shortly thereafter. And yet He chose Judas “who also betrayed Him.”

Did Jesus know that Judas would betray Him? Yes He did.

As the eternal Son of God He had known this from eternity past, and even as a man He knew who the traitor was. His death burial and resurrection are the center of His ministry and what He is focused on from the beginning to the end.

Again the lessons from this selection of Judas the traitor are pretty straightforward: Ministers of the Gospel who have been ordained and installed to serve in Christ's Church must be humble and take heed. There is no security in being ordained or holding a church office: The assurance of our salvation and a minister's faithful service can and must rest **ONLY on our relationship with Jesus: We must be able to refer to our self as the Apostle John did, as “the one whom Jesus loved.”**

The second lesson is mirrored for the congregation: The Saints must not idolize ministers! We are called to obey, serve and love those whom God has placed over our care, **BUT our loving gaze and trust we give only to our Savior, and these must never drop from Jesus to mere men!**

- **Not to parents, not to spouses or friends and certainly **NOT** to ministers!**

Finally, I want us to see two important lessons from verses 17-19 which are verses that can easily be overlooked as simple transitional information as Luke gets ready to review the teachings of Christ:

Luke 6:17 “And He came down with them and stood on a level place with a crowd of His disciples AND a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, 18 as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. 19 And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all.”

- **First we should notice that again we have two groups: The disciples, twelve of whom are now Apostles and the crowds who have mostly come for the show!**
- **The text says that “power” went out from Jesus and healed them all: Disciple and spectator alike.**

It is a reminder that God sends the rain to the just and the unjust alike and that circumstances and even blessings are not a very good judge of our right standing before God.

- **Jesus has come to save His people from their sins and His presence is a very powerful presence indeed.**

We mentioned a few weeks ago how the many “miracles” we see today in modern medicine are much the same. These blessings have come through past Saints who understood that God’s Kingdom was to advance even in science and medicine. These many blessings now flow to the just and unjust, just like the rain.

- **Now the 2nd lesson is to ponder whether we are disciples or spectators: What choices have we made?**
- **Are we here at church to see what blessings will come our way or to serve Jesus?**

In our western materialistic and prosperous civilization we must be careful here: We tend to measure our lives and the lives of others by the accumulation of things and the comforts of this life.

Obviously God does not hate such things, seeing how He gave Israel a land flowing with milk and honey, made King Solomon rich beyond our wildest dreams and has poured out abundant blessings on Christian nations!

BUT God also gives many warning about judging how we are doing by such things and more importantly the danger of forgetting God in the midst of prosperity

Material blessings from God does not equal a place in heaven: Only faith in Jesus gets our name written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

In fact, it is shocking to look at what we know about the few individuals in the Scripture that we are most certain are spending eternity in Hell.

- **Rich man who ignored Lazarus**
- **Rich man who built more barns**
- **Perhaps the rich young ruler**
- **King Saul**
- **And then of course we have Judas Iscariot, chosen as an Apostle in our account this morning.**

Thinking about Judas can be haunting, but I want to submit that proper thinking about our lessons this morning will mean that even tragic Judas helps us to be secure in our salvation. But first we must be honest about what we know: Judas was chosen by Christ to be an Apostle, he was empowered and sent out to heal people and cast out demons. He was included and trusted among the other Apostles: He carried the money bag and NO other disciple suspected him as a traitor at the Last Supper.

However, even though Judas was an Apostle with all these blessings he was no better off than the other spectators we see in today's account or the religious leaders we studied last week. Jesus in the end said it would have been better for Judas that he had never been born.

With that honest assessment of Judas, we can now consider how these lessons teach us how to rest in the assurance & security of our salvation!

How you might ask?

- **Jesus prays all night and then selects Judas**
- **Judas is called and has the blessings of being not only a disciple but an Apostle, but goes on to betray His Lord**
- **We see crowds receiving blessings from Christ that will later reject Him.**

How can all of this possibly make us feel secure?

To understand more, let us move forward to the Last Supper where the betrayal of Judas was revealed to the other Disciples

- **We see them questioning themselves -- as we often do.**
- **We see them confronted by the enemy -- as we often are**
- **But secure in the hands of Jesus**
- **As we should ALWAYS know that we are as well!**

This all reflects where we all are in our relationship with Jesus:

Do we have doubts? At times we certainly do. I am sure that each of us can see ourselves sitting at that table when Jesus announces that a traitor is present, saying with the other Disciples “Lord, is it I?”

- **Our security does not lie in the things we have, the blessings that we enjoy or our ability to suppress our doubts.**

Our security comes from knowing that Jesus saves and keeps those who He has chosen to be His own. We cannot fully understand why Judas was chosen as an Apostle, but we know Jesus chose and keep the other eleven as His own elect sheep.

At that same supper where Judas was exposed as the son of perdition, here is what Luke records Jesus saying to the others: Luke 22:28 “But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. 29 And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, 30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

And turning to Peter, Jesus said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32 But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." Jesus has given us the gift of faith and prays that it will NOT fail!

And we see this truth even more intimately in the prayer of Jesus recorded in John chapter seventeen.

John 17:6 “6 “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. 7 Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. 8 For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.”

[Jesus has before Him Peter who will deny Him that very night and the other ten that will scatter and are still asking dumb questions]

9 “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. 10 And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. 11 Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are. 12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”

- **Do you believe that the Father answers the prayers of His own Son?**
- **If you can confidently answer YES to that simple question, then you know the answer to the question of whether you are secure in your salvation:**

If you have repented of your sins, been baptized in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit and trust Jesus for your salvation, then you can KNOW that the Father loves you as He has loved His own Son from all eternity!

Lest anyone think that Jesus ONLY has these disciples in mind when He asks His Father to keep ALL He has given Him, please listen carefully as Jesus continues to:

John 17:20 “20 “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; 21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. 22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: 23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. 24 “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

We who have believed the Word are included! Jesus prays that the Father keep all of us and promises to keep ALL that the Father has given Him!

- **That is truly a mystery to ponder for the rest of our lives as we rest in Jesus!**
- **It is also a mystery that should profoundly change how we live, as Disciples rather than just spectators!**
- **As I mentioned earlier, we should all be able to refer to ourselves as the Apostle John did saying, “the one whom Jesus loved.”**

I often sent those who are struggling with their faith or life in general to John’s first letter to the Saints, often suggesting that it be read once a day for a month. I don’t have time to read the entire Epistle this morning, but John captures how we must respond to the GREAT love that Jesus has shown us in this great prayer:

I John 4: “9 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.”

- **The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have shown us GREAT love!**
- **Let us not respond by being mere spectators**
- **But rather, as faithful Saints, let us go forth serving and loving the Risen and Reigning Savior**