

# Qualifying the Called

The Galilean Ministry Part 24

Mark 3:6-19 6/10/2018

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Summary: After being rejected by the Jewish authorities, Jesus left town and people streamed in from all points of the compass amid mass healings and a reference to the reunification of the kingdom (the withered hand), painting a picture of the time of restoration of the kingdom. But the most important component, repentance, didn't happen (they were fans, not followers). Jesus' plan to bring that about would be the new Israel he was creating in calling the 12. They are portrayed as bumblers to show that they weren't always as the readers knew them. Jesus didn't call the qualified; he qualified the called.

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## Introduction

### The Promised Kingdom

Before we pick up where we left off in Mark 3, I need to remind you of something. Do you remember back in ch.1 when Mark told us the topic of all Jesus' preaching? Jesus preached about the arrival of the kingdom.

**Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near."**

What did that mean to the people back then? It meant God was finally going to restore what had been broken for hundreds of years. Way back, 1000 years before Jesus' time, were the glory days of Israel when all 12 tribes were united in one, great kingdom—in the days of King Saul, and then David, and then Solomon. But then, after Solomon died, the 10 northern tribes rebelled against the house of David and the kingdom was ripped in two. Then eventually both north and south were defeated by their enemies and there was no kingdom at all in Israel, and eventually all the Jews were scattered to the nations. And so God sent prophets who promised that someday, when the Messiah arrived, he would regather the people of God and reunite the fractured kingdom. And that restored kingdom would be far greater and more glorious even than the glory days of David and Solomon. God would bring his people streaming back into Israel from every direction, there would be glorious miracles and mass healings, and all the people would repent and bow the knee to the Son of God, who would reign over God's kingdom forever and ever.

Can you remember those four parts?

1) The divided kingdom being unified under one king

You can read all about that in Ezekiel 37.

2) The regathering of God's people, where they come streaming in back to Israel from all directions

**Isaiah 43:5 ... I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west. 6 I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'**

God will bring his people back from the surrounding nations, north, south, east, and west.

3) Mass healings

**Isaiah 35:5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. 6 Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.**

4) All the people responding to the Messiah in repentance and worship

**Ezekiel 37:21 I will take the Israelites out of the nations where they have gone. I will gather them from all around and bring them back into their own land (there's the ingathering). 22 I will make them one nation in the land ... There will be one king over all of them and they will never again be two nations or be divided into two kingdoms. (there's the reuniting of the kingdom. And now here comes the repentance and obedience:) 23 They will no longer defile themselves ... with any of their offenses, for I will save them from all their sinful backsliding, and I will cleanse them. They will be my people, and I will be their God. 24 'My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees.**

When Jesus went around preaching that the kingdom was about to come, that's what it meant to those people. The reason I remind you of all that is we need that background to understand today's passage in Mark 3. We left off last time with Jesus healing this guy with a withered hand. Now keep in mind—Mark doesn't always give us specific descriptions of miracles. Sometimes he just says, "Jesus healed everyone in the whole crowd" – no individual accounts. But then he'll turn right around and describe one specific healing – a woman with a fever, a leper, a paralytic. Whenever he does that, there's a reason. Each miracle is designed to teach us something. For example, cleansing a leper was a picture of spiritual cleansing. Or the fever – that was to show Jesus' care for the disciples' families, and for the marginalized of society. Each one has a meaning. So what is the significance of healing a withered hand—why single that miracle out? Here's why: it's designed to call our attention to the one other time in the Bible where someone had a withered hand. That other withered hand event that will help us understand this passage, because it has to do with the kingdom. And I'll tell you when that was in just a minute.

But first let's take a look at what happened right after this withered hand so we can set the stage. Look at the very next verse.

### **7 Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake**

Why? Because they are trying to kill him, remember? Jesus made a scene—he healed the guy on the Sabbath, right in front of the Pharisees, and so they stormed out in a rage and teamed up with the Herodians to help them kill Jesus. And so Jesus gets out of Dodge.

## **Rejection of Christ**

We've just started ch.3, and the Jewish authorities have already completely and decisively rejected Jesus. They decide to kill him because Jesus exposed their evil hearts. So Jesus takes off, and then look what happens:

**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.**

## Signs of the Last Days Restoration

Remember I told you Mark writes with a paintbrush instead of a pen? That's what he's doing here. Look at the picture he paints. Pay attention to where all these people are coming from. 7 ... a large crowd from Galilee followed. 8 ... many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem So Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem – that's the entire nation of Israel. Then look where else people are coming from:

**8 ... Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon.**

**Tyre and Sidon** are north of Israel. **Idumea** is south of Israel. **The regions across the Jordan** – that's to the east. People are streaming into Israel from every direction. And what about the mass healings?

**10 he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him.**

It's all coming together. You say, "What does all that have to do with healing a withered hand?" The one other time in the Bible where there is a withered hand, guess when that happened? It happened right at the moment that the kingdom was ripped apart. The kingdom was united up through Solomon's time, but right after Solomon died, the northern tribes rebelled against the house of David and split off, and so God sent a prophet to the king of that rebellious group and he said, "If you do that, God will punish you." And instead of listening to him, that wicked king pointed at the prophet and told the guards, "Arrest him!" And the moment he said that, the hand he was using to point at the prophet immediately withered.

Then the king told the prophet, "Oh, sorry about that. Hey, would you mind praying for my hand?" The prophet did, and God miraculously restored his hand.

So when Jesus healed this man with the withered hand, that's not just a random miracle. It's designed to call our attention to the moment when the kingdom was ripped apart. Jesus is going to put it back together.

## The Missing Piece: Repentance

So the whole picture is coming together. We've got the great ingathering of Jews from the surrounding nations, the mass healings, indication of a reunited kingdom. Only one piece is missing—the most important piece. All that's left is the part where the people who are streaming to the Messiah repent of their sins and fall down and worship him and become his followers.

Is that what happens here? Do the people come to Jesus in repentance, clamoring to receive spiritual cleansing and forgiveness of sins? Hardly.

**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.**

There's not even a hint that a single one of these people came seeking forgiveness or salvation or spiritual cleansing. They want one thing: physical healing. Are they worshipping Jesus? No, they are about to crush him. There's nothing even a little bit reverent about their attitude. The NIV says **crowding** and **pushing forward** – those are actually pretty strong terms in the Greek. The first word can mean *to crush*. The other term means that the crowd was falling upon him. It sounds like Jesus wanted the disciples to get the boat ready because he was in serious physical danger.

To be trampled by a frenzied crowd can easily be lethal. And on top of all that chaos you have the demons going off in v.11—who knows how they were behaving.

**11 Whenever the evil spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, "You are the Son of God."**

They knew the truth about him, but demons can't be trusted with the truth. They are always up to no good, and will use the truth to deceive people, so Jesus shuts them up again.

### **12 But he gave them strict orders not to tell who he was.**

He had done this before back in ch.1, but not all the demons were there then, and so some of them didn't get the memo and Jesus has to do it again here.

If your idea of Jesus' ministry is that kind of folksy image of Jesus sitting around on a rock with a little kid on his lap and a few people standing around and a fluffy little lamb in the background – that's not how it was for Jesus. The scene around Jesus most of the time was not peace; it was *pandemonium*. Lots of pushing and shoving. Jesus' life was a busy, harried, high pressure existence. It was demanding, it was dangerous, it was relentless, it was invasive – the crowds would follow him right into his house so that he couldn't even eat.

## **Fans vs Followers**

And all of that would have been fine if the people were coming to him so they could know God and have forgiveness of sins. But these crowds aren't interested in that. They only want one thing – physical healing, and they don't even care about Jesus. They just want to use Jesus to get what they want – even if it kills him in the process. There is a very clear distinction, not only in this passage, but throughout the gospel, between the crowds and the disciples, or followers of Jesus. Two very different groups. Some people have described it as the difference between fans and followers. These people are fans. Jesus was a celebrity, and he had lots of fans – nationwide and beyond. Fans clamor around celebrities because they want something from them. They claim to love the celebrity, but really they just love what the celebrity provides for them. Once that stops, there's no love at all. They love their favorite sports star until he has a bad season, and all his adoring fans are shouting, "Get that bum out of here!" And that's exactly what is going to happen with these crowds.

Don't ever think you're a Christian or that you are a true follower of Christ just because you show up in church. If you show up with the rest of the crowds to hear Jesus' words—that doesn't make you a follower. You might just be a fan. And Jesus is not a fan of his fans. On judgment day he's going to tell his fans, "Depart from me. I never knew you." Jesus demands that we follow him.

## **A Bigger Plan**

So what are we to make of all this? Jesus is clearly the one who is going to bring about the glorious kingdom of God, but the people aren't repenting and following him. The Messiah came, he fulfilled the prophecies, he healed the sick, performed miracles; but the Jewish leadership rejected him outright, and the crowds were just fans, not followers. So now what? What is Jesus' plan for winning the hearts of the people and bringing them to repentance?

One of my all-time favorite lines in any song comes from Joy to the World. It says, "No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found." When the Messiah comes, he comes to fulfill all the promises of the entire OT and bring eternal blessing on the whole universe, and that renewal and restoration and blessing will extend as far as the curse is found. Everything that is broken and messed up will be restored. The renewal will be as extensive and as pervasive and as comprehensive as the effects of the curse are.

At this point in Jesus' ministry, in Mark 3, Jesus still has a ways to go to get that done. He has healed some folks around Israel, preached in several villages around Galilee, but he's really got a long way to go to bring blessing as far as the curse is found. The enormity of the problems of the curse are so massive and pervasive, they are portrayed here by Mark as being overwhelming. The masses of broken humanity come from surrounding countries and mob Jesus to the point where he has to plan an escape route.

Is what Jesus has been doing going to get the job done? If you draw a graph of Jesus progress against sin and evil and disease and sickness and death so far, and then you extrapolate that line out to the rest of

Jesus' life, that line doesn't even come close to getting the job done. You've heard that famous line from Jesus, "We're going to need a bigger boat"? We see what's happening here and we realize, we're going to need a bigger plan. And what we find here in ch.3 is that Jesus has a bigger plan. Just going from village to village and preaching and healing isn't his plan for reaching the world. He has something much bigger in mind, and that plan gets unveiled here in ch.3. And you can tell that this is going to be something of massive significance by the way the Lord sets it up.

## Something Big

### 13 Jesus went up on a mountain

Any time you see someone go up on a mountain in the Bible, look out. You know something really big is about to happen. (Moses getting the law, God appearing on Sinai, Abraham sacrificing Isaac, Elijah calling down fire on the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, the Transfiguration, the Sermon on the Mount, the list goes on). Going up on a mountain, in the Bible, signifies something very important is about to take place.

### 13 Jesus went up on a mountain and called to him those he wanted

The word he uses for **called** has the idea of an official summons. You could get called by anybody, but you get *summoned* by a king, or a court. It's an official word. Jesus issued a summons to **those he wanted**. That's the word for describing the will of God. Divine election. It's all very high, lofty, majestic, divine of language. This is a monumental, history-changing moment.

## The Twelve (A New People of God)

### 13 Jesus went up on a mountain and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. 14 He appointed twelve

The word for **appointed** is also significant. It normally means *to create or to make*. It's the same word used in the Greek translation of Gn.1:1 for God creating the world. In appointing these men Jesus is creating something. And what did Jesus create?

### 14 He appointed twelve

That might be the most earth-shattering verse in the gospel so far. What does the number 12 represent in the Jewish world? One thing: the 12 tribes of Israel. Twelve was not a typical number in Jewish fellowships. You would often see them appoint a group of 7 leaders, or 10, or 15, but not 12. The only time you see 12 is the 12 tribes of Israel, who were descended from the 12 sons of Israel. And so now, when Jesus comes to restore the kingdom, Israel rejects him, so he goes up on a mountain and creates his own 12. What does that mean? It means he's creating a whole new Israel. Jesus is recreating the ancient people of God on completely new foundations. Instead of the 12 ancient patriarchs, it's the 12 Apostles. All the promises God made to Israel are still in place, but God is going to bring them about through these 12 men. Now the people of God, instead of being defined as the physical descendants of 12 patriarchs, they will be the spiritual descendants of the 12 Apostles. In other words, the church.

## The Results

Someone might hear all that and say, "*That's the bigger plan? You're going to usher in the glorious, eschatological, eternal kingdom of God where all of creation bows the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ by appointing a handful of fishermen, a tax collector, and several other nobodies? Is that going to work?*"

Yes. These 12 men are the greatest success story ever. At the beginning of Acts there's a small group of believers huddled together in a room. Now 2000 years later there are millions of Christians all around the world devoting our lives to following every word these men wrote. Skip ahead to Revelation

and you see a vast multitude that no one could count from every tribe and tongue standing before the throne of God worshipping him - all through the ministry of these 12 men.

## **The Role of the Apostles**

How did that happen? What did Jesus train these guys to do? He trained them to preach.

### **14 He appointed twelve-- designating them apostles ... that he might send them out to preach**

He trained them to be preachers. How long did that take? How long did the training go to bring these guys from scratch all the way to where he could send them out on their own to preach? Three chapters. At the beginning of ch.6 Jesus gives them some instructions, then sends them out on a short term mission trip.

### **Mark 6:12 They went out and preached that people should repent.**

So Jesus trained them to preach, and he also gave them the power to heal and to cast out demons, so people would know they were from God.

## **To Carry Out Jesus' Ministry**

### **14 ... that he might send them out to preach 15 and to have authority to drive out demons.**

And if you've been with us in this study, that description should sound really familiar. That's been the constant, repeated description of the ministry of Jesus throughout the book so far. Jesus went around preaching and driving out demons, and now he is deputizing these men to do his messianic work and to preach his message. The Apostles never preached anything other than Jesus' message.

### **Matthew 10:27 What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.**

And that's exactly what they did. They spent their lives doing that, and when they started getting old, they took that message and committed it to writing. And that's the NT. If you want, you could put the whole New Testament in red letters – every word. It all came from Jesus. Jesus whispered it to them, and they passed it along to us.

It's fashionable these days to do research to check into your ancestry – find out if you're related to some famous person in history. But that doesn't really mean anything. If I could somehow discover that I'm descended from Abraham Lincoln, so what? That doesn't really say anything about me. Your spiritual heritage, on the other hand, really does say something about you. It really does matter. Paul called Timothy his son, even though he wasn't a biological son, he was his son spiritually. And that really does matter. If you are a follower of Christ, your spiritual ancestry goes all the way back to one of the Apostles.

So Jesus' bigger plan for establishing the kingdom was built on the foundation of the Apostles, but it didn't stop there. The work has continued through the church for the last 2000 years. And the way the church turned the world upside down was by devoting themselves to Jesus' message that came through the 12. Acts 2:42 is a summary snapshot of how the early church operated, and the very first thing it says is:

### **Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' doctrine**

## **Qualifying the Called**

So back to Mark 3. Starting in v.16 Mark gives us a list of their names. Of all Jesus' many followers, Jesus appoints 12 as Apostles, and we're given all their names. Why these specific 12? Were they the most highly qualified? Hardly. Not one of them had risen to a position of spiritual leadership prior to this. Every time we see them they have weak faith, little faith, no faith, they are confused, their hearts are hard,

they don't accept Jesus' words, they respond in wrong ways. They seem like 12 incompetent, hard-hearted numbskulls. Later, in the book of Acts and in the Epistles, they are spiritual giants. What made the change? Jesus. And that's why it's so important that we see their weaknesses and failures when they were first called.

## **The Heroes' Beginnings**

When you read Mark, you need to keep in mind who the book of Mark was written to. The book was written a whole generation after Jesus' death – 40 years later. So the readers were people who had only ever known the Apostles as spiritual giants. The Apostles who were still alive were old men, who had led the church as Apostles for decades. These people had seen the Apostles' signs and wonders, they had seen the spiritual maturity, the leadership, heard their preaching – these were the greatest men they knew. They would have been in awe of these men. Whatever spiritual leaders you are most impressed with in the church today, or in church history – the reformers, Spurgeon, Moody, Augustine, whoever—the 12 Apostles were far greater and more impressive than any of those great men of history. That was the only perspective the people of Mark's time had of the Apostles. And so they might have thought, "Oh, Jesus called those 12 because they were so highly qualified for the job." And the Holy Spirit wants us to know, "No, they weren't qualified at all when Jesus called them." Because Jesus doesn't call the qualified; he qualifies the called. When Jesus called these great, spiritual giants, they were dull, doubting, bumbling klutzes who, many times seemed like lost causes, and then he teaches them, trains them, disciplines them, takes them through some hard, painful lessons, let's them fall, picks them up, restores them, and shapes them into what he designed for them to be.

## **Christ's Transforming Power**

And if we, as the church, are the body of Christ, we should do the same thing. One thing that comes very naturally to us is spotting disqualifying flaws in people. Some people are professionals at that. They find disqualifying flaws in everyone. But that's not the work of Christ. The work of Christ is to restore that which is broken, not to just point out that it's broken.

But what's really amazing here is what Jesus is able to do with the unqualified. This is an awesome demonstration of Jesus' power. Imagine you were the hiring manager tasked with finding qualified applicants for the position of Apostle. Someone who could be trusted, after Jesus leaves the earth, with the task of taking a teaching that has been utterly rejected, and propagate it around the whole world, and to develop and oversee an organization that would persist for thousands of years and continue to grow in strength until the Second Coming. Oh, and in their spare time, to write the Bible too. That's the job description, and the work environment involves persecution, imprisonment, and torture, and the retirement plan is to be martyred. You have to fill 12 openings. What kind of qualifications would you look for?

That was Jesus' task that day up on that mountain. He climbs up there, gets down on his knees, starts crying out to the Father in prayer, the whole night goes by, sun comes up, Jesus gets up off the ground, summons his disciples, and out of the crowd he starts calling some names. "Simon – come forward. Where's your brother? Andrew, come up here. James and John. Philip..." etc. That was Jesus' bigger plan, and it worked. He chose 12 utterly unqualified men, and used them to turn the world upside down. And he did it that way to make it clear that the power came from him, not from those men.

And also to show us how he deals with us in our weakness. He can do anything through anyone. Your potential is limited only by Christ's power, which means it's unlimited.

## **Conclusion**

So what's the bottom line for this whole study? I can't think of a better application than the one Peter gives in 2 Peter 1. Listen to the words of the man who was there on that mountain that day, and who became the leader of the Twelve.

**2 Peter 1:16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. 19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and (here's the application) you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.**

Let's make sure our hearts joyfully receive this sacred message that was entrusted to the Apostles and handed down to us in the holy Scriptures.