

Mark 3:7-19

Ordinary Men, Extraordinary Calling

Good morning, Church.

Thank you for joining us here at Calvary Old Town.

God bless those of you who are watching online.

Today, we will continue in our verse-by-verse look at Mark's Gospel.

The message is titled, "Ordinary Men, Extraordinary Calling."

This week, I ran across a story of one of my favorite football players.

My kids will tell you, I love underdog stories.

I, myself, often feel like the underdog... So I love to see guys who overcome tremendous obstacles and other people's doubts with great humility.

Kurt Warner played as the starting quarterback at the University of Northern Iowa.

He was expected to play in the NFL, but he did not even get drafted after college.

So he went to work stocking shelves at a grocery store for \$5.50 an hour.

Most people assumed he would never play.

The Green Bay Packers picked him up in 1994, but released him shortly after.

So he made an interesting career move, joining the Arena Football League's Iowa Barnstormers and later the Amsterdam Admirals in NFL Europe.

And it was there in those days of small things that he earned a notable reputation, garnering the eye of the St. Louis Rams at that time.

The year after I graduated High School, 1999, Warner was playing back-up quarterback in the NFL.

Something happened that season: Trent Green, the starting quarterback, was injured, and Warner was put in.

He went on to have a 13-3 season with an explosive offense, nicknamed that year "The Greatest Show on Turf."

I watched him throw for 414 yards against the Tennessee Titans in the Super Bowl that year, leading to a dominant win.

His name is now in the Professional Football Hall of Fame and the Northern Iowa Hall of Fame.¹

This man was my hero, going from stocking shelves, people saying he didn't have what it took, to holding the Lombardi trophy!

What a reversal in the story.

Well, here in our text today, we see another reversal in Mark 3.

Jesus looked at certain men whom society considered ordinary and entrusted them with a mission that would outlast every empire on earth.

They would literally be accused of turning the world upside down.

We will be in Mark 3 verses 7-19...

Let's pray, and we will get into it...

It is something to consider the people God chooses to do His work through here on earth.

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/news/711413/b8c5935f327558b0ca2378007df67334>

As we look at the first men chosen to lead, I hope that two things happen.

Primarily, that we would never look at someone else's life and think that God cannot use them.

Secondly, I believe it is clear that God can use any of us in this life.

Yes, even you, you have a purpose in His plan, don't count yourself out, ever!

So, let's consider the progression up to this point...

Jesus tactfully and masterfully handled the Pharisees, the religious establishment, who were trying to trap Him.

They looked to their own manmade rules and traditions about the Sabbath and were convinced that Jesus violated the standards they had set for themselves.

Jesus healed a man whose hand was withered, showing incredible compassion and mercy toward him.

They were blind to the great work done before them.

After the man was healed and their foolish religious ideas exposed, we saw for the first time in Mark's

Gospel that the Pharisees went from there to plot how they might kill Jesus.

Think about how satanic good religion can really be...

When people who have worked so hard to keep the outside of their cup clean and neglected the inner sanctum of their lives are threatened to be exposed, they resort to the most terrible forms of destruction and mayhem.

They quickly get to work for their real god, and they start to kill, steal, and destroy.

The Pharisees were not all cruel men, but the leadership was, and their influence led to this moment.

All that Jesus was doing was teaching and healing, and this became a threat because they needed all the attention on themselves.

Jesus came to present the True Way and to expose the hypocrisy of those who kept others from a real relationship with God.

Jesus began to exert power over the demonic realm, over sickness, and even over sin!

He boldly declared Himself to be Lord of the Sabbath, meaning He was greater than their Law...

This is what ignited their wrath...

Now, with all this happening in the background, we can enter into our scene this morning and look at verse 7 now...

A Great Multitude Follows Jesus

(Matt 12:15-21)

3:7 But Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the sea. And a great multitude from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea **8** and Jerusalem and Idumea and beyond the Jordan; and those from Tyre and Sidon, a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing, came to Him. **9** So He told His disciples that a small boat should be kept ready for Him because of the multitude, lest they should crush Him. **10** For He healed many, so that as many as had afflictions pressed about Him to touch Him. **11** And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw Him, fell down before Him and cried out, saying, "You are the Son of God." **12**

But He sternly warned them that they should not make Him known.

Jesus is still gaining immense popularity with the common people.

They are now swarming him, having come from all the surrounding regions to hear this Carpenter-turned Rabbi.

They wanted to listen to Him teach about the Truth of the human condition, and they were seeking help and hope that they could be changed.

Jesus was showing them that they could have a personal relationship with God.

This was the exact opposite of what the religious establishment was teaching the people.

We see here, “A great multitude followed Him.”

This shows us how desperately people need hope in this world.

Religion does not give them the hope they need; no, it creates conditions, and the human heart is notorious for breaking rules, crossing lines that

should not be crossed, and eventually breaking any condition religion can create.

The only hope for us has to come from outside of us...
And God in the Flesh was there, and a Great Multitude swarmed Him for their hope...

A normal-sized multitude is pretty impressive, wouldn't you think? But this was no normal crowd; it was "great!" and many people flooded into Jesus.

Remember, He has completed His teaching circuit around the Sea of Galilee and throughout the region.

And word was reaching as far as Jerusalem, even further south in Judea, from Jordan, even as far as Lebanon, and Tyre and Sidon.

People were coming from over 100 miles away...

With no automobiles, trains, or even horse and carriage...

Think about the desperation in these people, willing to go through a really perilous journey to get to Jesus.

We had kids coming here on their own, walking 30 minutes to be with Jesus...

I remember years ago, seeing this little girl running past the prostitutes and meth monsters there in the park...

I wondered what was going on; she was about Sofia's age, seven at the time...

I wanted to make sure she was safe... so I kept watching, and as she got closer to the church, I saw a little smile, no shoes on, but a pretty little dress, and she ran through the walking gate, and right into our children's ministry.

She had lived in the neighborhood here and had just found out that we were a church; she could not wait to come and spend time with Jesus.

I wondered what in the world was going on in her little life that she would be running to Jesus like this.

That little girl, over time, fell in love with Jesus and this place; she started bringing her sisters and their friends...

I soon found out, there was a reason she ran to this place... I would show up some days when no one was around, and she would be playing with her toys all

alone on that grass out there, this place, Jesus was her refuge.

Little did we know, one day CPS would be asking us to take her in our home... and what a year that was, looking back, remembering those little bare feet running to Jesus.

He rescued her... we got a year with her in our home, and she was baptized, and goodness, what a thing it is when we run to Jesus.

Here, people were coming from all over Israel and beyond.

They were not lethargic in their approach to Jesus, no way, Mark records here they were pressing into Jesus, against Him...

He had to keep a boat ready in case He was about to be crushed...

What enthusiasm these people had... I don't want to make too much of a theological point on this scene... but I hope you don't come to church out of obligation or as a duty...

It is harder for me to wake up at 4 am on any other day to go to the gym...

But Sunday, I can't wait to get out of bed to get here, to see what Jesus will do in His Church that morning.

Most Saturday nights I don't even sleep, and I wrestle with the thought of just coming in at 2 AM... because I want to see Jesus work among you all, even in my own life...

I need Him desperately... and when I am with you, the family of God, the Body of Christ, there is this incredible reality that His Spirit is moving among us, in our conversations, worship, He is speaking from His Word, and we are speaking to Him in our prayers...

It is wonderful... come to church with enthusiasm...

Listen, there is no religious pressure here, our main goal is not that you look a certain way... our heart for you in this Church is to meet with Jesus...

We trust that if you know Him more, He will bring any changes necessary to your life...

Press into Jesus...

Notice even the demons were crying out...

James 4:7-8 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Listen, those monsters in your life cannot be around Jesus...

This is another reason we gather... we bring our struggles, this is where we recoup and gather strength for this spiritual battle we are in... In this place, Truth combats the lies out there...

Those demonic forces tormenting your life right now... hate when you come around the people of God.

Press into Jesus...

Notice that the demons cry out here, and Jesus forbids them to speak.

He did not need an advertisement from hell.

That would be like us putting a church ad on a porn website.

We don't want to be identified with the wickedness in this world.

It is never good to let demonic influences advertise for Jesus.

Jesus shuts their mouth – they won't advertise for the Son of God...

These people wanted those demonic voices removed from their lives; thus, the desperation of pressing into Jesus.

The people were excited to be in the presence of Jesus...

The religion of their day was so arduous and difficult that it made it a complete drudgery to come to God.

The people's excitement really is an example of what our relationship with God can be.

You can be excited to come into the presence of our Lord.

I pray you see Him as the ultimate answer to this fallen human condition.

Now, the common people were beginning to love Jesus – They could not get enough of Him, and they marveled at His teaching and the touch of mercy He gave upon their desperate lives.

In Luke's Gospel, at this point in Jesus's ministry, it states...

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.

We see that Jesus did need a little break here, not to go and sit on a cruise ship feeding His flesh by the way, as some people will justify by Him taking a break from the ministry.

No, He had one of the most important decisions of His earthly ministry to make.

There was no time to take a break for Himself...

He went to seek the Father on His next steps, and He continued all night in prayer...

Jesus knows His mission here on earth is to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

He came to die, and He knows tension is building, and soon the religious establishment will be allowed to pierce His hands on that Roman Cross.

Jesus has only 3 years to train these men to spend their lives serving His mission on earth.

3 years... an interesting period of preparation... I heard a pastor say, "If you have not been on a mission trip or actively been engaged in serving for the great commission after being 3 years old in the Lord, you are living in disobedience."

I don't know if that stance can be supported Biblically, but it is the template Jesus used with His Apostles.

You should pray about that... those of you over 3 years old in the Lord... has your faith just become a series of popping around Churches, looking for what best serves your needs?

Or, are you actively participating in the Great Commission by now...

So, here in our text, Jesus has three years to get His men ready.

I imagine these men will be elite, at the top of their class and society.

Maybe if Jesus were not in prayer about it, that is where He would look, the best schools, the best rabbinical classes, those who are a little wealthy and can afford this lifestyle.

This is how modern leadership is often selected in the church; instead of being directed by God, they look at the most obvious choice according to man's standards.

Jesus models the correct way here of choosing workers, prayerful, God-directed, and those who might otherwise be overlooked.

Let's look at the "Not-so" Mighty men Jesus picks here, starting in verse 13...

The Twelve Apostles

(Matt 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16)

13 And He went up on the mountain and called to *Him* those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. **14** Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, **15** and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: **16** Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; **17** James the *son* of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder"; **18** Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the

son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; **19** and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.

Now, Jesus, after His time with the Father on the mountain, looks at the many who are following Him, and He begins to select those the Father desires.

He calls out twelve specific men from the faithful to lead.

They should have been special men, trained men, gifted men, and, at the very least, religiously devout men.

Yet it is fascinating to consider the men Jesus assembled that day.

He called ordinary men from various walks of life.

Some would have been very opposed to one another.

It is interesting to consider that the men and women God picks are not so extraordinary... but, in many ways, plain or unassuming.

We can look at example after example from God's Word.

They give us a clear picture of all this...

Think of Joseph early in the patriarchal history of Israel. He endured so many hardships and trials, came through a prison sentence after being falsely accused, and was betrayed by his own family, which was a dysfunctional family to say the least.

Yet God lifted that man to a place of power, where He could show Grace to all who had wronged him, and he was ultimately used to keep the Messianic Bloodline strong by saving his entire family.

Or Moses, even, a man who was abandoned as a baby, a man who was rejected by his own at first, but lifted up to a place where he would be used to deliver the Hebrews from their bondage in Egypt.

He had a speech impediment... Seemed insecure and unsure at times, even struggled with anger...

But God still used him mightily...

How many of us can relate to Gideon this morning, in the Book of Judges?

He protested to God over His decision to pick him to lead Israel.

Judges 6:15 "O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan *is* the weakest in Manasseh, and I *am* the least in my father's house."

He knew he was not mighty...

Yet, as those many terrible Midianites came against Israel, he was God's choice.

Where did God find him? Probably training in martial arts somewhere, or practicing with the soldiers in the army, maybe at the local sports draft as a top-ranked athlete.

Nope, this guy knew the enemy was out there; they would come in and steal the harvest...

And in Judges chapter 6, God finds His hero in a winepress, hiding, threshing his crops in fear.

Not a mighty man at all...

Yet God assures him that he will lead the victory against this brutal enemy.

He tells Gideon, Judges 6:14 "Go in this might of yours, and you shall save Israel from the hand of the Midianites. Have I not sent you?"

And there is the key to all of it! God asks, “Have I not sent you?”

That is all that mattered... The enemy was thick as locust...

Yet God still reduced the 32,000 men that gathered to Gideon down to 300!

God is making a point here, **Judges 7:2** “The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me.’”

Those 300 men were sent with instructions that would make any military tactician run...

They were armed with trumpets and torches.

And God, through this unlikely method and this unlikely army, would send the 120,000 enemy combatants running in fear.

No natural power, with complete reliance on God, is always at great odds.

The very self-aware Gideon led the people of God to a great victory...

I believe it is important we assess ourselves properly...

Over and over again, I see the greatest trouble arises here in the church when people begin to think too highly of themselves.

When they are filled with pride and self-righteousness.

But when we can be honest about who we are, take off the protective masks, and let go of pretending, we find something pretty radical...

It is not many mighty that God typically uses... but humble and honest people... who can get out of the way of God's Glory...

Consider the truth Paul gave to the Corinthians...

1 Cor. 1:26-31 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. **27** But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; **28** and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, **29** that no flesh should glory in His presence. **30** But of Him you

are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption — **31** that, as it is written, "*He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.*"

Back to our scene... Jesus looking out... and He was not looking at the crowd as a man would.

He was looking at them as God would...

In the Twelve, Jesus saw a group of men whose hearts were ripe for world change...

But, Jesus would be putting fishermen with the tax-collector who robbed their business for years...

He saw those from the lower end of town, even a few from uptown, and He is melding them together.

Rebels against Rome, and those who found a way to work with the Roman system.

What a strange team... Jesus recruits this motley crew, so diverse...

Peter, James, and John have the most revealed about them... but the bulk of this team will be celebrated and known in heaven.

This is probably for good reason, heaven's will, so that God would get the glory for all that was accomplished through them.

Matthew was a traitor in the Jews' eyes... and we see this man named Simon the Cananite, which is not his nationality, but carries the meaning, "Zealot."

Simon the Zealot was a political radical before Jesus, who hated the Romans...

The Zealots were known as "Daggersmen."

This would be in reference to the knife under his cloak and used on the Roman sympathizers...

My father-in-law was an outlaw Biker... and the first couple of months of me dating Jess, I avoided meeting him...

One day, she jumped into my truck at the usual place I would pick her up, at the edge of the driveway.

She looked at me and said, "My dad said it is time you meet him... so tomorrow night I need you to join us for dinner."

She told me he was part of a motorcycle club... A club sounds nice. I was part of the Cub Scouts growing up...

But the club he was a part of was nothing as I had ever been around... and one of the things they were known for was giant machetes hanging from their belt.

The first guy I met on my way to her door for dinner was this gentleman from the club.

He came right up to me, shook my hand, and said, "My name is Butcher."

I thought about that... even in my own un-sober mind, I could conclude that Butcher did not have a job at the local deli, and that name probably came from something to do with that giant machete hanging from his belt.

Anyway, the Daggersmen were known for their assassin's dagger... And Simon, apart from Jesus, would have come after men like Matthew.

In Jesus, natural enemies come together and become a united force for good, for the Kingdom of God.

Here in Old Town, in this gathering, as the Church, we see diversity and normalcy...

Some have termed us misfits... those who don't fit in the normal religious culture.

Yet God calls us into His service... not because we are from the best schools or would be the first picked... but because God can be glorified in us.

And sometimes He teams us up with people we would not naturally want to be around.

My wife was raised to think a certain way about cops...

In her home, people would jump out of windows or back doors if a uniformed officer showed up.

For years, even when my father was in his uniform, she would start shaking, not out of fear, just from the adrenaline she always felt around them.

But when we served in Apple Valley as youth leaders, the Lord used a Deputy with the Sheriff's Department to help build our youth group, and he brought in so many kids.

He was part of the SHOCK program for troubled youth... He was a believer, so he knew SHOCKing them in the boot-camp-style reform program would only be a temporary fix...

And he was so bold in his faith... he would preach Jesus to the kids, and the ones whose hearts were open, he would get them into our youth group.

Believe it or not, some of those old youth still come to church, and he is actually in this church, and my wife loves the man...

She could even see him in uniform without the shakes...

But this kind of thing only happens in the Lord... bringing an outlaw's daughter and a deputy to build a youth group.

And we have been friends for a decade and a half now...

This only works in God's economy...

This first crew Jesus built here was brought together by the life change Jesus offered them, and the mission He would send them on...

Now, what about Judas Iscariot, who would betray Jesus...

Obviously, Jesus knew his purpose, having prayed over this decision all night...

It was prophesied in

Ps 41:9 Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted,
Who ate my bread, Has lifted up *his* heel against me.

Jesus said this was speaking of Judas...

John 13:18 but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, '*He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.*'

Jesus knew one of them would be deceived by the devil...

There have been some people who really struggle over this... why would Jesus pick Judas?

I don't struggle with this at all... The more difficult question I have always had is why Jesus would choose me and use my life?

I grew up in the church, knew the goodness of a home that looked to Jesus, hoped in Jesus, and was filled with Jesus.

Yet, I rejected it all as soon as I was old enough to choose for myself...

I knew the Truth and ran from it... in my opinion, this is worse than someone growing up never hearing the Everlasting Gospel.

This is a detestable transgression... willfully rejecting my Savior... choosing a life of sin and selfishness, only to wreck everything in the process that I ever touched...

Then, looking back to Him only when I had no other place to go... Why would He ever take me in, take me back?

But He did, He saved me, restored my life, showered Grace on me, a man so undeserving...

I gladly accept the enlistment into those known as "Not Many Mighty..."

I can only Glory in Jesus, and His Amazing Grace...

Notice what a disciple was called to do.

Mark 3:14-15 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach. And to have power to heal sickness and to cast out demons.

If someone asked you today, “What does it mean to be a Christian, a disciple of Christ?”

Some might say, “It means oodles of love and funny feelings.”

“It means to me, prosperity, health, and happiness.”

You know, we have these strange definitions today, in this American mindset of comfort and ease... believing our Christian faith somehow revolves around my happiness and well-being.

A biblical look at what it meant is right here... When you come to Jesus, you meet Him as your Savior; He then becomes your Lord.

Your life is now His... And there are actually things a Christian, a disciple, should be known for besides selfish goodies we get from God...

Notice, before Jesus called them to preach, He called them to be with Him.

So, one thing we should be known for is pressing into Jesus.

Before any ministry takes place, a relationship must begin.

Before Service comes fellowship.

Before anyone can be used to change the world, they must sit at Jesus's feet first.

Then, we become those sent to preach, to have power over sickness and to battle demonic strongholds...

Being a Christian means we are reaching others, serving others, and engaged in a mission well beyond our lives...

Jesus said, **Luke 9:23 "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."**

Man, that does not sound like it is about my happiness at all.

We quote this today, put it in nice little flower designs, hang it on our walls, and it is such a wonderful little quote...

Jesus's first hearers lived in a day when the terror of the cross was all around them...

Whenever they saw their neighbor, co-worker, that guy from the local hardware store, taking up his cross and walking somewhere...

They knew it was the last time they would ever see that man again.

Death was at the end of that march... and a brutal death...

This Christian life is not intended for us to find our good life now...

Jesus says His followers won't even consider self...

Now, He showed us He was willing to do what He preached... a rare trait in preachers...

He lived it out... and said, as we follow Him, follow His example.

There is a world out there waiting to hear about Him, who desperately needs Him...

But a bulk of the church is caught up in thinking Christianity is something I feel when I sing songs and worship with fog machines and brilliant lights flashing all around...

"I just feel His presence."

These men in this list, apart from Judas Iscariot, took this Gospel to the ends of the world; they took up their crosses and followed Jesus... Peter would die on a

literal cross after watching his wife be crucified in front of him...

Andrew was said to be crucified in Greece on an X-shaped cross.

James, John's brother, would be the first to give his life, as Herod Agrippa would make a show of his death, taking his head.

John would live long, but suffer immensely in his sojourn.

Philip was traditionally thought to be crucified in Asia Minor.

Bartholomew was beaten, flayed, and possibly beheaded.

A sword or spear killed Matthew.

Thomas was also speared to death in India.

James, the son of Alphaeus, was thrown from the Temple and clubbed to death.

Thaddaeus was killed with a club or an ax...

Simon the Zealot was martyred...

Matthias, who replaced Judas, Church Tradition holds, was also martyred for his faith.

These men went... laid it all down... these ordinary men...

Maybe you think ministry, serving others, being used by Jesus is for other people, a different type of churchgoer...

There is only one type of Christian... Christians being "little Christs." We are to follow His example if we are going to take on His Name...

And sure, you think you are not qualified... think of that voice that is telling you that... who benefits the most with Christians sitting on the couch doing nothing in self-loathing... The Devil...

None of us is worthy, none of us is great. The reality is, there are not many mighty...

But the qualification is obedience... in all your weakness... Hear the Lord say, **Judges 6:14 "Have I not sent you?"**

So, you have lived in obscurity; you have spent many years stocking shelves, knowing there is more for you in this Christian life...

It is not too late to engage... the greatest days of ministry can still be ahead...

Sure, accept your weaknesses... accept your inadequacies, the Lord knows they are there... That is why you are the one He wants...

Tell the Lord, "If you have sent me, I will go..."

He has called His followers to Go... His ordinary children have been called to an extraordinary work...

I hope that excites you... There is a place in His story of Grace... Start in prayer this morning, where He might use you... and when He speaks... Obey immediately...

Remember the first step is to spend time with Him...

If you need to take that first step of faith, meeting Jesus as your Savior, come up and let someone pray with you to receive Christ as your Savior.

Then get ready to live out that faith in His Power.

Let's pray...