

HE CHOSE TWELVE
Ordination and Installation Sunday
January 21, 2018 –Mark 3: 13-19 & Mark 1: 16-20
The Church of the Covenant

This is a pun for all those struggling with recovering from the flu, as I am. You should really eat a dictionary because then you will get rid of THESAURUS throat you ever had! Sorry about that! I am indebted to the great Presbyterian preacher, Clarence McCartney, and his book, “He Chose Twelve” for the ideas and even title of this sermon today. On this Ordination and Installation Sunday I lift up the twelve people whom Jesus Christ called to follow Him and be His closest disciples. McCartney begins by saying, “It is interesting that most of us can name Santa’s reindeer better than we can the twelve disciples.” Santa’s reindeer –Dasher and Dancer, Prancer and Vixen, Comet and Cupid and Donner and Blitzen. O and I forget the last one. What’s the last reindeer’s name? (Rudolph) The twelve disciples –Simon Peter, James and John, Andrew and Phillip and Batholomew, Matthew and Thomas and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus and Simon. O and I forget the last one. (Judas). Is it Sleepy or Dopey or Gumpy? (I’ve known a few elders like that over the years, not in this church, mind you!). But if you’re like I am, I am pretty good at remembering Peter and James and John and Andrew and Phillip and maybe Matthew and Thomas...but then my brain starts to supply the names of the 7 dwarves not the 12 disciples! And then there were Sleepy and Dopey and Grumpy and Happy... Hi ho, Hi ho, its off to ministry we go!

But if you really look at these people whom Christ called to follow Him they really were not very remarkable people at all. In their world no one would have taken a second look at them. They were not well-educated. Not wealthy. Not well-dressed. Not noteworthy in accomplishments. Their resumes would have been mostly “fishermen”. Twelve fairly average people doing extraordinary things. He Chose Twelve and these were the twelve Christ chose. Do you want to do extraordinary things with your life? Then be called by Christ to follow Him.

So Jesus comes to each of the twelve, even as Jesus comes to each of us who are called to serve, and in His own way and in His own time speaks into our hearts. Christ is walking along the Sea of Galilee and he sees Simon Peter and Andrew casting a net into the sea. He finds you where you are doing what you ordinarily do. And HE looks into their eyes and says: *“Follow me and I will make you...”* Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men. (Mark 1: 17) Please notice that Jesus has a great sense of humor and is a punster of the first order. He comes up to two fishermen and twists the phrase beautifully in a perfect pun and says: “You think you are fishermen; but I will make you fishers of men.” Funny and clever really. And what is it about this Jesus? What is it about His eyes that HE can look into your soul and say “Follow me” and you “immediately drop your nets and follow Him”. Do you want to do extraordinary things with your life? Then be called by an extraordinary SAVIOR who just happens to be the Son of God and by all means FOLLOW HIM.

Please notice that Jesus says *“I will make you...”* (Mark 1: 17) How do you have the time to serve? Jesus will make the time. How do you have the wisdom to serve? The Almighty God who is wisdom personified will supply your ideas. How do we do miracles of service and mission and everything we are called to do? Because the Lord of the Universe will provide our every need. *“Follow me, and I will make you...”*, says Jesus. “I will make you.” I will do it in you. I will raise you up by my power and my Spirit to be the elder or the deacon I have called you to be. If I did it for the twelve, I will do it for you. One requirement, just “follow me” and “I will make you into the extraordinary, exceptional, personally powerful, difference-making man or woman I have called you to be”. It is no secret what

Jesus can do. By the way, this is how the 7 dwarves become the 12 spiritual giants of the disciples. Dwarves become spiritual giants when they stand on the shoulders of Jesus.

There is no test per se for being a disciple, or for being an elder or a deacon. We don't administer a written exam to those we ordain and install today. But as you follow Jesus, O THEN there will be a test. When you stand for Jesus people will trash talk you behind your back. When you're really doing something great for the Lord, people will push back and criticize you. At the very moment when you're endeavoring to do the right thing it is in that very moment when the storm of criticism may come. When you commit your life to following HIM it may be then that times of stress and trouble come in your own life. Jesus doesn't promise you when you follow HIM that nothing bad will ever happen to you. No, HE promises that as you follow HIM in your life then HE will walk with you and you will emerge from the other side of the storms of life stronger, better, more reliant upon HIM. You will emerge from the other side of the storm a spiritual giant of a disciple when you choose to follow Him no matter what. Christ saw in eleven of the twelve He chose people who would follow Him and get to the end of their life still following HIM. "Lord, to whom else can we go? You alone have the words of eternal life." Do you want to do extraordinary things with your life? Do you want to walk through every storm in life unscathed? Then follow HIM and HE will make you...

I loved the time I was able to serve on mission trips in Kenya. The Christians there have nothing materially but everything spiritually. Because there are so few pastors the elders have to lead; they have to pray and teach and evangelize and plant churches and do a lot of things we think pastors alone are supposed to do. A pastor may serve as many as 25 churches and can only preach in one each Sunday, so it is the elders who lead the church the other 50 Sundays of the year. It is a vibrant, spiritually alive church because the elders and deacons are there to follow Jesus and do extraordinary things for HIM. Its interesting to me that when an elder introduces themselves in Kenya they will say something like this –"Hello, my name is Kaugi. Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior and I follow HIM. I am called by God to be a Presbyterian elder for my entire life and I am the husband of one wife." My name. My spiritual status as a follower of Jesus. My calling in life. And morally how I choose to live my life because of Jesus. When introducing themselves, they tell us who they are; who their identity is; who they are in Christ and what HE has called them to do and be. BE AN ELDER. BE A DEACON. This is your new identity in the Lord Jesus Christ!

Elders and Deacons, you aren't called to serve on a committee. You are called as Presbyterian elders and deacons to FOLLOW JESUS as Lord. You aren't called to serve for just three years. You are called to follow the Master for life. You aren't called to have a nice, placid life, free from disagreement or pain or loss. You are called to walk through the storms of life with Jesus. Follow HIM and HE WILL MAKE YOU...into a spiritual giant of a man or woman, the very person you have deep in your heart always longed to be... HE CHOSE TWELVE AND HE HAS CHOSEN YOU. Amen and Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*

As noted above, I am indebted to the great Presbyterian Pastor and pulpiteer, The Reverend Dr. Clarence McCartney, of First Presbyterian Church in downtown Pittsburgh, for the ideas in this sermon. I commend his book, HE CHOSE TWELVE.