

[Spirituality](#)

[Pencil Preaching](#)



by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)

[patrickjmarrin@gmail.com](mailto:patrickjmarrin@gmail.com).

## [\*\*Join the Conversation\*\*](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

January 21, 2021

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)



“Jesus summoned those he whom he wanted, and they came to him” (Mark 3:13).

*Heb 8:6-13; Mark 3:13-19).*

Have you ever been told that someone important called and left a message to return their call? Your first thought was probably, “I wonder why they are calling me?” With the new administration being assembled in Washington, many people are likely in this position, curious, excited and anxious to learn what such a call might mean for them and their futures. Imagine that you return the call, and a voice says simply, “I want you to be with me.”

With his usual succinctness, Mark describes Jesus’ selection of his apostles with potent verbs. “He summoned those whom he wanted, and they came to him.” We imagine a scene in which many people have been attracted to Jesus because of his preaching and miracles. They are all eager to be his disciples. Jesus disappears up a mountain, a biblical cue that he, like Moses and Elijah, is going to commune with God. After a night of prayer, he then returns and selects from the many hopefuls those he wants to be his apostles.

Jesus chooses the Twelve named in today’s Gospel because he wants them to be with him. He invites them into a relationship with him so he can send them ahead of him to preach his message and drive out demons in his name. The word “apostle” means “one sent.” His call contains the power to do this. Jesus authorizes his apostles to represent him.

It is at this point in the story, both Mark and we realize that the men Jesus wants after conferring with his Father are not the most promising prospects. Peter is indecisive, a boaster and a coward. The Zebedee brothers, James and John, are ambitious brawlers. Matthew is a despised former tax collector and Judas will betray Jesus. Why would God tell Jesus to select such men to be his closest companions?

Jesus apparently saw them not as they were but as they would become. Each apostle would be prepared by failure to preach him as the paradox of failure who triumphs. Each one will fail but be redeemed by God's mercy, the very message they will preach to others. If the apostles were not at first the best and the brightest, they would grow to their full potential through suffering. And what of Judas?

The evangelists try to explain Judas by saying he was preordained to betray his master to fulfill the scriptures. His sin and suicide were the fate of the damned, his name assigned to history's most hated traitors. Yet Jesus called him. Another mysterious explanation is that Jesus knew his tragic deed and final despair and wanted the world to see that his death on the cross on Golgotha also saved Judas hanging from a tree on a nearby hill at the same fateful hour of darkness. If so, the Apostle Judas, too, slipped into eternity with Jesus to proclaim God's infinite mercy for sinners.

Advertisement