

The Risen Christ Chooses His Leaders

Acts 1:12-26

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

13 And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.

14 All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

15 In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said,

16 "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

17 For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry."

18 (Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.

19 And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

20 "For it is written in the Book of Psalms, 'May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it'; and 'Let another take his office.'

21 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."

23 And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said,

"You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen

25 to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."

26 And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

Sermon Outline:

Scripture Intro (vv.1-3): Luke's gospel and his Acts of the Apostles may be thought of as one book with two parts. Together they cover 66 years of history: Luke's gospel records the 33 years of Jesus' life, and Acts relates the 33 years following Jesus' ascension. By means of this symmetry Luke communicates that Acts is just as much about Christ as his Gospel is. The only difference is that Jesus' work after His ascension was accomplished through the Holy Spirit. That has moved one to rename Acts "The Continuing Words and Deeds of Jesus by His Spirit through His Apostles." Thus, our focus in this study will be on Christ's work of building His Church through the Spirit.

In this passage, I see three categories of leaders: dignified, distinguished, and delegated. Each category contains "sticks of wood" made to be leaders by God's grace even as they sought the lowest place of service in grateful response to salvation.

I. **Dignified Leadership** (1:12-14). The first category of leaders we observe in this passage are those dignified by God's magnanimous grace.

A. Categories.

1. Unknown. First, there are the apostles. These were previously unknown men catapulted to revelatory, authoritative, and foundational leadership in Christ's Church.
2. Insignificant. The second category of people dignified by grace is the women.
3. Unconvinced. The third category is the unconvinced. This is the first we learn in the Scriptures that Jesus' brothers were eventually converted. Jesus' brothers had refused to believe in Him during His earthly ministry (John 7:5).

B. Commission. What is their first commission? To return to Jerusalem, God's city, which had been overtaken by man-centered religion. Christ is turning these unknown, insignificant, unconvinced people into conquerors. God, through the power of the Spirit, would use them as He desires to use us to conquer the world by means of the spread of the Gospel.

II. Distinguished Leadership (Acts 1:23-26). The second group of leaders is the apostles. They were distinguished by Christ to be the fathers of the church, humbly but authoritatively leading the church family.

A. Entrusted. The whole Church is empowered by the Spirit—every man, woman, and child. By that power, the people of the Church entrust authority to their elders.

B. Extruded. So how does one seeking the lowest place of service in the Church come to be a distinguished leader? It is by means of what Francis Schaeffer called "extrusion." He imagines a piece of soft metal being forced into the shape of a die by the pressure of a giant press. One is made a distinguished leader in the Church, not by seeking it but by being extruded into it. This generally involves suffering and affliction.

III. Delegated Leadership (Acts 1:15-22). Finally, Peter is an example of a delegated leader. He is the symbol of a minister of the Word. Peter is delegated by the Spirit to be the leading spokesman among his apostolic equals.

A. Messenger. Peter does not speak from his own authority but rather points his listeners immediately to the Word of God. A minister may prescribe no more and no less than what the Word prescribes explicitly and implicitly.

B. Ministerial. For balance it is important to say that a minister and elder's authority is also ministerial.

Discussion Questions

1. What resources does the young Church turn to to solve the problem of how to replace Judas in the apostolic band? How do Scripture, prayer, and providence have a part in the selection process?
2. Which one of these three things do the disciples start with when they are eager to discern God's will? Where do you start when you are interested in learning God's will on a particular issue?

3. What do you think the first Christians prayed for in the upper room (Acts 1:13-14)?
4. What attitude and responses do the disciples have towards Judas' death (see Acts 1:15-20)? What key truths are they learning? Focus especially on the nature and design of the Scriptures and about the sacred privilege and divine appointment of serving in ministry.
5. On what grounds does Peter declare that another apostle will be chosen? To what will the new apostle witness (22)? How should this strengthen your own faith?
6. What does the prayer of the disciples reflect regarding their convictions about God (24-25)?
7. What are the major lessons you learn about leadership in Christ's church from Acts 1:12-26? How would you live differently if you embraced Francis Schaeffer's counsel to seek the lowest place of service in every situation and every organization of which you are a part (cf. Luke 14:7-11)?

Going Deeper

1. How should the following encourage and challenge you? Schaeffer writes: "No matter how little you think you are in God's hand you will be used to accomplish his will in eternally significant ways. There are no little people and no big people, only consecrated or unconsecrated. The call on every Christian's life is to seek the lowest place of service to God which he will then transform into consecrated leadership."
2. Should we cast lots in making important decisions in our lives today such as choosing church leaders (26)?

ESV Study Bible Note: The lots were probably marked stones that were placed in a pot and then shaken out (cf. 1 Chronicles 26:13–16). This does not imply that people should cast lots to make their decisions today, for there is no such command in any NT letter or in any of Jesus' earthly teachings. The appointment of a twelfth apostle was a unique situation, a choice that was made by Jesus himself. In the rest of the NT, the elders and deacons and other church leaders are chosen according to decisions made by human beings, whether by an apostle or by others in the churches (see Acts 6:3–6; 14:23; 15:22; 2 Cor. 8:19; cf. 1 Tim. 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9).