



Luke 6:12–16

12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. 13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: 14 Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, 15 Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 Judas son of James,

and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Reflection

Jesus is reforming and renewing the structures of the Israelite nation. He hasn't come to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfil them (Matt 5:17). God's foundational promise to Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, was that all nations would be blessed through him (Gen 12:1–3). God's most important promise to Israel's greatest king, king David, was that one of his descendants would reign on his throne forever, his kingdom having no end (2 Sam 7:12–16). God promised Moses that one day, he would raise up a prophet like him (Deut 18:18). God promised Daniel that one day he would send one like a

Son of Man given authority, glory and sovereign power who would be worshipped by peoples of every language, whose dominion would be everlasting and whose kingdom would never be destroyed (Dan 7:13–14). And God promised Isaiah of one who would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brings us peace would be put on him, and by his wounds we would be healed (Isa 53:5). This one is now here in Jesus Christ who, in Luke 6, is setting about reforming and renewing the structures of the Israelite nation in fulfilment of all that the Old Testament says about him.

We've seen Jesus teach that the forgiveness of sins, previously the domain of temple, priest and sacrifice is now available in him. We've seen his love for gentile sin-

ners, blessing people from every nation as a true Israelite, not as part of a people who'd wandered into racism and ethnic superiority. We've seen Jesus renew the Sabbath supplying in himself everything the Sabbath was meant to give – peace, rest, restoration and communion – while making sure that his followers don't neglect justice, mercy, faithfulness, mission and love in our times of rest.

And today Jesus continues reforming and renewing the people of God themselves, beginning a new family, a new community, a new people in place of the twelve tribes of Israel who had fragmented and failed. Because of sin and apostasy eleven tribes were no more, yet from the scattered remnant, Jesus, one from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10) (the last remaining

tribe), a shoot from the stump of the cut down tree of Jesse will bear fruit (Isa 11:1) and that fruit will be the formation of a new nation, Christendom, the kingdom of God, that will spread to all of the nations on earth.

Let me read today's passage, from Luke 6:12–16,

12 One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. 13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: 14 Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, 15 Matthew, Thomas, James son of

Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

And what strikes us here firstly is verse 12. Did you catch that part about Jesus praying all night? What's the longest single amount of time you've spent praying? For me certainly never all night. To my shame I often drop off asleep before I finish praying. And yet here we have Jesus, who is God himself, praying to his Father the whole night long. Why? Because he has an important decision to make and so he's seeking his Father's counsel and blessing. We read of the outcome next morning.

13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve

of them, whom he also designated apostles: 14 Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, 15 Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, 16 Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

In place of Judah's twelve sons who became the twelve tribes of Israel Jesus appoints twelve apostles. Just ordinary people: fishermen, tax collectors, former followers of John the Baptist, a couple of zealous Jewish nationalists and others we know nothing about. Normal people plucked from relative obscurity and handed the most important mission on earth. Jesus is setting up a new people of God,

under the leadership of these men. And he designates them apostles which means envoys, sent-ones, with the mission of taking their eyewitness accounts of the good news of Jesus Christ to the nations, so that people from every nation would be blessed through Israel in accordance with God's original founding promises to Abraham. Jesus is reforming and renewing the people of God, setting Israel back on track, back on mission to the world according the plans and purposes of God revealed as far back as Genesis 12 and right throughout the Old Testament since, despite the stubborn and ongoing neglect of their duties by Israel down throughout the centuries.

Think

We are also sent-ones. We are also eye-witnesses to the power of the gospel to change lives. We are also normal people plucked from obscurity and handed the most important mission on earth. And so as followers of Jesus, as his disciples who stand in a long line of Christians extending right back to the Twelve and Jesus himself, it is right to ask ourselves if the nations are continuing to be blessed through us. We've been blessed to be a blessing, in our homes, our neighbourhoods and our workplaces. We've been entrusted with the gospel and new lives meant to reform, renovate and renew our culture and our world to the glory of Christ.

Consider today where Jesus has sent you. Perhaps you're an envoy to Westpac bank or to an Eastern Suburbs mother's group

or to a dentistry practice with a large clientele. What does your mission field look like in your particular context? How are you blessing the culture of your workplace? What good are you doing in your mission field for our world and for our Saviour's glory? Who in your mother's group are you actively praying for and actively witnessing to as the mission of Jesus continues through the work of your life?

Pray

If you are able today, why not follow Jesus' example of prayer? Pray for something big, something bold, something crucially important to the mission of Jesus. And spend more time than you might otherwise, sacrifice something, maybe it's sleep, maybe it's your lunch hour, make

it cost you a little, to spend some extended time in sustained prayer as we see Jesus doing in the passage in front of us. He prayed all night to enlist the right people in his mission. He's enlisted you, why not pray like him today for something big? Jesus prayed that God would raise up twelve men to be the beginnings of his church, a church that numbers today well into the billions. How might God bless your prayer if you put in similar devotion and effort? Who will you wrestle in prayer for today?