

**LIVES THAT REMIND US ABOUT GOD - Meeting Yourself In The Sacred Text Part seventeen - Sunday, June 9th, 2024
Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON**

SIMON - What Jesus Saw In A Radical Subversive

- 1) **SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION** - Simon is only referred to in one passage in the New Testament - **Luke 6: 12-16** - **“In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. [13] And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: [14] Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, [15] and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, [16] and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”**

While he has different names in the Gospels, here he is called ***Simon the Zealot***. This is not a nickname for a zealous person. The Zealots were a well known ***underground political movement***, organized with the single goal of seeing the ***freedom of Israel from the oppression of Rome***. Rome was the untolerated enemy. The Zealots would compare roughly to the modern day freedom fighters in Poland, Hungary, Nicaragua or El Salvador. They were passionately committed to their cause.

- 2) **WHY DID SIMON CHOOSE JESUS?** - It's not really surprising that Simon would choose Jesus. Jesus seemed to fit in perfectly with Simon's political agenda. In fact, ***the popular hope of all the disciples was that the Messiah would establish the throne and rule of Israel.*** This was still in their minds even after the resurrection of Jesus - **Acts 1:6** - **“So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"**

While Simon did come to a deeper understanding of Jesus' true mission of redemption, these other thoughts were certainly in his mind at the time he was first drawn to Jesus. Jesus was exactly what Simon needed to get what he wanted. How many people think they can start their relationship with Jesus on those terms today? Simon is the perfect example of someone who turns to Jesus with a specific personal agenda in mind. He has ***pre-pictured*** why he needs Jesus and what Jesus should do for him. The Lordship of Jesus is easily compromised in such cases.

- 3) **WHY DID JESUS CHOOSE SIMON?** - This is the central question. One would think with all his blind spots regarding the real mission of Jesus Simon would have gotten in the way of our Lord's plan. Yet obviously Jesus had a plan in choosing Simon. He prayed all night before making His selection. What did Jesus see in Simon and what is the present application to our lives as followers of Jesus Christ today?

- a) ***Simon would soon learn how the Kingdom of God differed from the kingdoms of men. And how God's Kingdom would be established in this world.*** Simon wanted Israel established and Rome booted out - and fast. We can't imagine how hard it must have been for Simon to hear Jesus say "**....render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's**"(Matt. 22:21).

He would later hear Jesus say that the Kingdom of God works its presence into the world like ***yeast in a batch of dough*** (Matthew 13:33). This was nothing at all like Simon's radical approach to reform.

Jesus chooses Simon's prejudices and misconceptions to reveal ours. So little of spiritual worth is advanced through personal strength and organized human might. Maybe there is still something for us all to learn here.

There is also the issue of divine ***timing***. Simon must have found it an enormous shift in thinking to learn to wait to see God's plan unfold on a different agenda from his own. How impatient we can be to see God's order established now, through the work of our own hands! Jesus' plan was to build a church of transformed individuals who would reflect His character and share his Spirit, and even suffer with Him in a sin darkened world.

Political might and prayerful, patient submissive faith are two totally divergent approaches to advancing God's kingdom in this world. In fact, they are two different *interpretations* of God's kingdom.

- b) ***Simon clearly demonstrates the diverse nature of personalities in the Church.*** We should be so grateful Christ's call embraced the likes of Simon and even Judas. God starts with all of us where we are and the choosing of the twelve proves it in Scriptural revelation. The call isn't linked to human ***qualifications***. There's no room for ***pride***. And there's infinite space for ***patience*** with the quirks and failings of others.

For example, what was Jesus trying to prove in calling Simon the Zealot and Matthew the Roman tax collector? It would have been quite a prayer circle with those two bowing together in it! How do you learn to love someone who labors to finance a government you are dedicated to overthrowing? What would this do to your understanding of God's kingdom?

Jesus' call of Simon along with Matthew has a divine design to it. I'm to see that the call of Jesus ***overrides*** all other allegiances. Personal preferences and personal goals don't shape the boundaries in the body of Christ. The Lordship of Jesus does. Simon and Matthew could leave their ideological differences behind and pray and fellowship together.

- c) ***Simon would be very familiar with the kind of radical commitment Jesus required.*** For all his misguided thinking and personal weaknesses, there was something positive Jesus saw in Simon. However misguided his zeal was, Simon knew what it was like to give his life for a cause. He knew all about ***commitment***. He knew what it was like to go against the flow. His was not a particularly easy road in life. He didn't fit in too well with the establishment. He had probably made ***unusual sacrifices for the cause***. We don't know what his family thought about his convictions.

Jesus saw this in Simon. He was willing to ***spend*** himself on something ***other than*** himself. And Jesus always prized that quality. Perhaps there was something in the challenge of Jesus' words, "***take up your cross and follow me***", or, "***If a man will lose his life for my sake he will find it,***" that resonated with Simon. We'll never know for sure what drew Simon to Jesus, but it may have been the taste of a big, radical vision.

We need the reminder of Simon. It may be the greatest sin of all to ***tame*** the call of Christ. Jesus knew Simon wasn't likely to do that. Most of us today would have felt he was too volatile and fanatical to be of much use in the church. Jesus liked him just fine.