The Surprising Twelve

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Preacher: Dr. Michael Staton

[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. Thank you for all of you here this Sunday morning.

Hope that you have had a good week, and we're grateful for you being here with us. As Jeff has already welcomed those who are guests with us, let me just add my voice to his. And thank you, those who are new to our church.
We're always grateful to have guests with us, whether you are new in this community or maybe visiting family for summer trip. Whatever, just passing through whatever it may be, you are always welcome and wanted here.
And we hope that above everything else, you hear from the Lord today through his words. It's taught, sung, proclaimed, and we pray also lived out in our lives.
Before we get to Mark chapter 3, let me just take a brief moment. You know, one of the things that I think it's important for us as Christians to know is how to handle key, pivotal moments in our lives and culture.
[1:18] I'm not the Holy Spirit. We have the Holy Spirit, and He is not me. So, you don't need me to tell you what to do and how to live your life.

That's the responsibility of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit of God that leads us daily as we seek Him. I do, however, want to be a faithful shepherd to you and try to give a biblical perspective on key events that happen in our day.
And my heart would be this. There is no shortage of those who are critics of the church. And in some cases, that's fair and justified.
There are churches who don't preach the Word. We should be critical of that. There are churches who equivocate on issues of biblical clear doctrine to walk in step with the world.
Of that, we should be critical. But there's always going to be those outside the church who don't love the Lord and who don't believe His Word, who are going to use any situation for their advantage to be critical of the church.
[2:35] And I just want to say to you that we want to love them. We want to serve them. We want to pray for them.

And as we do that, we remind ourselves we do not live for their approval. And so, one of the things, of course, that has been very significant in our nation over the last few days has dealt with Roe versus Wade being overturned.
And one of the things that we must remember as the body of Christ, and let's just be clear, we stand for life. And it may be a very popular thing for people on the outside to be critical of the church and say they don't care about families or they don't care about babies once they're born, they don't care about those who are in need.
Let me just make very clear that you understand that is not a fair accusation of this church and of many, many churches. Our church, every single year, we give money to organizations that are fighting for life and ministering to those who are in need.
We've got members of our church who volunteer in organizations that are helping families in need, helping young moms in need, helping give counsel to those who are going through struggles.
[4:06] We've got people who are employed at organizations helping to do that. We've got people in our church who help to raise funds to support needs of families and of individuals who find themselves in a hard situation.

We've got people in our church who have provided very tangible, practical needs for them. We've got people, families in our church who do foster care.

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We've got families in our church who are currently doing foster care, who are training to do foster care. We've got families in our church who have adopted. We've got families in our church who are currently walking through adoption.
We have families in our church who are waiting to be placed with a family for adoption. Our church gives a significant amount of money financially.
This would be a good time just to remind you of this. Our church has a fund where we provide a significant financial help for families who are adopting any member of our church who is going through the adoption process.
[5:11] Our church will fund up to $4,000 per adoption to help offset the cost of that. And so I just want to say that if you get frustrated by those outside the church lobbying unfair accusations toward the body of Christ, just understand it's not true what they're saying.

And we're not the only church that's true of. Let me be very clear of that. There are a number of churches that take care of families in need, that support life, that support babies, that support taking care of not just before a baby is born, but after a baby is born and with anything else that comes up. So just understand that. Don't... This is my shepherding advice to you. Don't get engaged in trying to win battles with people who do not love the Lord Jesus Christ.
Pray for them. Share the gospel with them. Serve them. You won't argue someone into the kingdom. That's the work of the Holy Spirit.
Let Him use your words. Let Him use your life. Let Him use your love. So people can see and hear what the gospel is all about.
[6:37] But you do not need to win an argument with the world to be effective for the kingdom of God. You need to love Christ above all else.

Live for His name and for His glory. And let your light so shine before men that they would see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven. And if the light that you shine is mocked or hated or distorted or denied, the name and the cause of Christ will prevail no matter what.
And let me say one last thing with this. If someone in this church finds themselves in an unexpected pregnancy, someone in our church finds themselves choosing life but then feeling they don't know where to turn or what to do, understand this.
Our church will love you. We will stand with you. We will help you. And we will do our best to shepherd you, not for a few weeks or a few months, but as long as you would allow us to walk with you and shepherd your family, we will lovingly, joyfully, graciously do that.
We want you to understand that this church is not a collection of perfect people.
[8:26] This is a collection of sinners who have been saved by God's grace. And every one of us in this room needs to be reminded that it is the grace of Jesus Christ that will carry us through.

And whether what we believe and what we stand for is respected or hated. Let's be clear and let's be on the record.
We believe the Bible. We trust in Christ alone. And we will not compromise on what Scripture says. And at the exact same time, we will not turn our backs on those who are in need because our heart's desire is that those who do not know Christ would come to know Him.
And we want to joyfully welcome those from death to life, from darkness to light. Amen? That's our hope and that's our prayer.
[9:42] If you would open your Bible with me to Mark chapter 3. We continue on in our study of the gospel of Mark. And we looked last week, verses 7 down to verse 19.

And just to remind you, if you were with us and for those who weren't, to kind of catch you up, we looked at three truths last week from this past. Let me remind them, remind you of them.
And then I want to take a few minutes this morning to take a closer look at these 12 apostles that Christ called. First of all, in verses 7 to 12 last week, we looked at this truth, that Jesus refuses the testimony of the impure.
Remember, Jesus refuses the testimony of the impure. Remember, the demon confessed that Christ is the Son of God and Jesus shuts him down.
Why? Because Jesus is not interested in the impure, in the demonic giving testimony to who He is. But the good news, number two, is that Jesus welcomes the ministry of the imperfect.
[10:58] Jesus welcomes the ministry of the imperfect. Verses 13 to 18 records where Jesus calls His 12 apostles. And these are imperfect men. He shut down the worship of the impure, but that does not mean that the imperfect are not allowed to come.

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All of us are imperfect. And Christ in grace allows and welcomes the ministry of the imperfect. And as we'll look at in just a minute, these 12 that He called, this is not a roll call of the who's who. These are not the brightest. These are not the wealthiest. These are not the most influential. These are very, very imperfect men. But the Lord welcomes the ministry of the imperfect.
And then thirdly, this strange reality in verse 19 that mentions that one of the 12 was Judas Iscariot who betrayed Him.
The third thing we looked at last week is that Jesus allows the friendship of the insincere. He allowed the friendship of the insincere. And I point that out because for three years, Judas appeared to be a friend of Jesus and the disciples.
[12:15] For three years, he went everywhere they went. For three years, he listened. He heard. He served. He ministered.

He traveled. Everything about him for three years was friendly. And Judas serves for us as a very clear warning.
It is possible to be friendly with the things of God and not be converted. It's possible to be friendly with the church.
People who come to church because there's kind people here or people who are friendly with the church and allow their kids to go to camp or to go to VBS or people who are friendly with the church and do some ministry with the church because they like the people that they're around or they like the way they feel when they are around the church.
But being friendly with the things of God is not the same as being converted. Be aware of that. I heard someone say just a couple of days ago, someone who's being very, very critical of believers and said, it's getting easy to tell Christians they are very out of step with our nation to which I said it's about time.
[13:43] Praise God for that, right? Praise God for that. It's about time Christians realize they're out of step with this culture. It's about time they realize that our job is not to be pleasing to the culture.

Look, don't let your lives be offensive. Don't let your language be offensive. But here's the gospel message. People are sinners and their sin brings judgment and that judgment is eternal unless they repent and trust in Jesus Christ.
For someone who believes that, it is the most beautiful message of salvation. For someone who rejects that, it is absolutely an offensive message. You bet we're out of step with this world.
The people that don't love the Lord are not our enemies. We want to love them. We want to serve them. But be careful because there are those in our culture, it's true, who will hate you, but there are also those in our culture who will be friendly toward the things of God for what they think it will bring them.
And if that's you, I just want to warn you that being friendly with the things of God is not the same as being converted. And Judas is an example of that.
[15:09] Well, here's where we're going in a couple of weeks. Verse 22 that we'll pick up in a couple of weeks is an amazing passage.

It deals with the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. Many people talk about the unpardonable sin creates a lot of concern.
Just the mention of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, the unpardonable sin creates all kinds of anxiety in people wondering what that is about. What does that mean? Have I committed that? How does that affect me? What would that even look like? We're going to look at that in a couple of weeks. And we're going to take a few weeks, I suspect, to walk through that so that hopefully you can understand very clearly what that is about.
I'm going to be out the next couple of Sundays. I'll be preaching out of town next week and then spending a week in Los Angeles. I'll be teaching at the Master's Seminary with some of the doctoral students in the program there.
[16:15] And so I'll be away a couple of weeks doing some teaching there. And if the Lord brings that to your mind, I'd love for you to pray for me as I'm out there with the doctoral students there. And while I'm gone, you'll be fed well.

And when I get back in two Sundays, we're going to begin to tackle the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit. But before we get to that, I thought it would be wise for us to take one extra week here and just linger a little bit at what we looked at last week and looking specifically at the men that the Lord

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called to be His apostles.
They're found for us here in Mark 3 that we've looked at last week. And starting in verse 16, He appointed the twelve. Then He names them and I think there are some very helpful things for us to consider for our own life when we look at these twelve.
They're not famous, at least not when they're called. They're obviously well known today, but when they were called, they weren't famous. They weren't noble. They weren't priests.
They weren't scribes. In fact, the very calling of the twelve show us that Christ is rejecting the Judaism of the day because He does not call unto Himself those who are the religious elite.
[18:00] He overlooks them because those men have taken what was the law of God and perverted it with the traditions of men. Eleven of the twelve names that Mark names here were from Galilee.

Galilee was known to be a group of uneducated people. People looked down on those from that area. Only Judas Iscariot was the only one who was not from that area.
It was said in Acts 4.13 of Peter and John, you're familiar with this, it says, when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished.
It was astonishing to see these men who were common, who were normal, who were regular. And yet the Lord is going to use them to turn this world upside down.
The Bible records for us in several different places when Christ would call these men to follow Him. And there's a call to follow Him. There's a call to ministry, a call to conversion, and now in Mark 3 a call to apostleship.
[19:20] And these men, as we'll look at, are men who will look a lot like you. They were regular people.

They were committed, but they will struggle with sin. They would desire to be faithful, but they will falter in their pride.
They will at times be bold and sometimes speak before their mind kicks in. They were committed, but sometimes that commitment wavers.
In fact, when Jesus is going to be hanging from a cross, you'll only find one of them present.
The rest have scattered. after three years of walking with Jesus and seeing the miracles, hearing the preaching, and seeing evidence day after day after day, when the heat gets turned up hot enough, all but one scatters.
[20:38] it's interesting to think that the names of most kings and rulers in history, most of them today are unknown or forgotten altogether, but almost universally people recognize these names.

James, John, Peter, Andrew, these are familiar names. I've met a lot of people named James, a lot of people named John, I know some Andrews, never met a Judas because it's synonymous with what he did.
kings and rulers names tend to come and go, but these twelve remain. You find them listed in Scripture four different times we find the listing of them, and they are always in three groups of four. The same four names are first, the second four names in the middle, the last four names are always third. Let's look in that same order here that Mark gives them to us.
First, he mentions Simon Peter. He was not the first one called, but he's known as the first. Matthew 10, verse 2, says, now the names of the twelve apostles are these, first Simon, who is called Peter.
[22:14] The word there is protos, means chief, it's not first in order, it's first in priority or rank, he's called and he's the leader, he's the recognized leader of this group, obviously, underneath Christ.

And while Peter is the leader of the group, he is also often messing up. Bold, opinionated, strong in spirit, sometimes speaks too quickly, and in his passion sometimes gets tripped up.
If that reminds you of people you know, don't say their names and don't elbow them, but I suspect you can think of someone that that reminds you of. If you can't think of anyone that it reminds you of, it's because people think of you, probably, with that.
Peter's a lot like us, isn't he? Peter's a name. He was a leader of leaders, given the nickname Peter by Christ, a word meaning rock, and yet, this apostle who is the leader among the leaders, who is always mentioned first in the listing of the twelve, is the very same one who will deny the night Christ is arrested before His crucifixion that even knows Him.
This is the one that Christ chose to be one of His twelve. And then Mark mentions James. James and John were brothers. They ran a fishing business.

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[24:07] And James is, he and his brother, known as the sons of thunder. They're strong. They're powerful men as far as their personality.

And James is going to give his life. Acts 12 says, about that time, Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church, and he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. James was a stormy man, and some have called him the man of energy because of his nickname, fiery, passionate. And he would, in the end, lose his life.
It's interesting when you read about the way that the disciples, the twelve apostles here, would serve. You've got Andrew, who would quietly bring people to Jesus, and then you've got James, who's ready to call down fire from heaven.
Different personalities, different gifts, different styles. It was James and John and Peter who were the only ones allowed to go in and witness the raising of Jairus' daughter, and it was the same three allowed to go on the Mount of Transfiguration.
[25:37] James had a lot of things on his resume, so to speak, but he struggled with pride. Bold, courageous, and strong, but could struggle with pride.

He had to be reminded and taught that leadership is about service, and that success is about sacrifice. sacrifice. But it's a lesson he learned as his life on earth would end with his head being severed, not revered, not cheered, a martyr because of his devotion.
His brother John, John, John writes a lot in the New Testament. He writes the Gospel of John. He writes the letters of 1 John, 2 John, 3 John. He writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the book we know as Revelation.
John had a eunuch ministry, outlived the other apostles. He was a very black and white kind of thinker. It was light and dark for him, right and wrong.
When you read 1 John, you see that and pick it up clearly. And yet, he is also a man that you could sum up his writings with two words, truth and love.
[27:12] You see that over and over again with John. 25 times in the Gospel of John, he mentions love. More than 20 times in his epistles, he mentions love.

He loved the truth and he loved the Lord and he wanted others to love the Gospel. He's loyal, imperfect, but he was faithful.
On the cross, Jesus, surrounded almost entirely by those who hate him, will look at John and look at his mother Mary and say, John, behold your mother, take care of my mom.
Most of the friends were gone by then. John was faithful. We meet Andrew, Peter's brother, also a fisherman.
Andrew lived in the shadow of his brother. father. When your brother was Simon Peter, not a lot of limelight or spotlight left for you.
[28:29] Peter was always in the spotlight, it seems. He was in the spotlight because of his personality, because of his ministry, and sometimes in the spotlight because he's being corrected in such a public way.

Peter says, Lord, you will not die. Surely this won't be. And then will call down a curse from heaven and say, I don't even know the man.
It's Peter who the Lord will say, get behind me, Satan. And yet it's Peter who after the resurrection, the word from heaven is, go tell the disciples and Peter.
Make sure Peter knows of triumphed over sin. But here's Andrew, a bit in the background.
His brother is always the one getting the award and always the one getting in trouble. Some of you can relate to that. Some of you have siblings that seem to always be the one getting the attention, whether for good or for bad.
[29:47] But Andrew's a worker. He's a helper. He's known for introducing people to Jesus, a wonderful thing to be known for.

And Andrew and Peter had very different giftedness. When you read about Andrew, he's introducing people to Jesus. When you read about Peter doing ministry, he's preaching to thousands of people.
Isn't it good to know that the Lord has use in his kingdom for all different personalities and giftedness? Andrew's not the one preaching like Peter.
Didn't make him any less valuable. Made him gifted in a different way. Then we meet Philip.
Philip would have known Andrew and Peter. They were all from Bethsaida. Philip is always listed first in the second group of four. Must have been the point person for that second group of four.

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[30:52] You know about him from the feeding of the 5,000 men. On one occasion, Jesus feeds 5,000 men. In addition to that are the children and the women. Between 15,000 and 20,000 people likely that were fed with the one boy's lunch.

Jesus test him on that day. Philip was smart. He was an organizer. Philip was an administrator. Philip would have loved Excel had he been around in our day.
We read about it. John 6 verses 5 to 7. Lifting up his eyes then and seeing a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, where are we to buy bread so that these people may eat? 20,000 people gathering here. Everybody's hungry. Everyone's getting kind of upset and restless and Jesus says to him, where are we going to find enough food?
There's a reason why he asked him. He's from the area. He knew as well as anybody else that there are no stores. There's no tangible earthly way to take care of this.
[32:04] Philip who has been around the Lord should have said, Jesus, only you can do this.

We can't do this. You can. Jesus, there is no human explanation for how you can pull this off. Our only hope is in you. That's what he should have said.
Instead, he opened up his laptop. And he did what many of you would do. He said, 200 denarii would not buy enough bread for each of them.
A day's wage was a denarius. 200 days wages would be about a year's worth of working days. And he does his algebraic equation and says, Lord, I've got it all mapped out.
I can give you a colored pie chart if you need it. There's just not enough way to pay for this. He was sincere. He was just sometimes so aware of earthly limitations that got in the way of trusting Christ to do what only he can do.
[33:17] You can probably relate to that. Your father who's unsaved. Your child who is wayward.

Your neighbor who mocks your faith. And you begin to say to yourself, I've seen what they've written. I've heard what they've said.
I watched how they live. There's no way they could ever believe. And it causes your faith to feel weak. And you begin to walk exclusively by your sight and not by your faith.
faith. When you're presented with spiritual challenges, understand the answer is not your computer, your spreadsheet, or your strategy.
Your hope is Christ alone. That's where the power comes from. You need to be comfortable being in situations where you say, Lord, I can't make this happen.
[34:22] God, only you can do this. I have no explanation of why my loved one would believe unless you save them.

I don't see any earthly way that this friend of my football team would ever give his life to Christ. I don't think that my friend would ever come to church. I've asked her a thousand times, whatever your story may be, just understand the power is always in the Spirit of God.
So we pray, and we proclaim, and we're faithful. There are so many times when you look at what the Lord's called us to do, and it's so easy to see the limitations, and the obstacles, and the struggles.
It's so easy to see the problems, and sometimes we become more aware of problems than we are prayerful. Jesus doesn't need your strategy.
He just longs for you to look to Him and say, on my own, I can't do this. On my own, they'll never believe.
[35:41] I can't persuade them to eternal life. And we trust. And like the boy that offered up his lunch, we just say to the Lord, I'm offering up my life to you.

And there are times where your ministry to you feels like nothing more than a few loaves and fish, and just like the disciples that day saying, what is this?
What is one boy's lunch? We're trying to feed 20,000 people. What's one boy's lunch? Well, he just offered it to the Lord.
And the Lord took it and broke it and multiplied it and used it to teach a lesson that to this day, 2,000 years later still stands. You keep offering your little to Jesus.
your ministry may feel small, your giftedness may feel insignificant, you keep offering it to Jesus.
[36:54] Mark then mentions Bartholomew, also known as Nathaniel. He was brought to Jesus by Philip. Philip says to him, recorded in John 1, 45, we have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets wrote, so Bartholomew knew the Old Testament, he cared about it, but we also know some weaknesses of Bartholomew.

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He's the one that said, can anything good come out of Nazareth? This uncultured city, this corrupt city?
He looked at people from that town and looked down on them. And yet, of this same man who struggled in that area, Jesus said of him in John 1, 47, when he saw him, behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit.
You put it together, he didn't always think the right things, but he was honest with what he spoke. Does that remind you of someone you know?
some people you wish you knew what they were thinking and sometimes of others you think, I wish I didn't know every thought you had in your mind.
[38:18] That was him. And then Matthew, Matthew who we looked at in detail a couple of weeks ago, the tax collector, among the most hated in the land.

He was one who bought a tax farming franchise from Rome. Rome is taxing the Israelites. The Israelites hated that.
Tax collectors were those who basically sold themselves out to betray their own countrymen and what a tax collector would do, just a reminder, we looked at this about a month ago, there were certain taxes set by Rome and they would have to collect those.
There were other taxes where there was some leeway and whatever you could get by with, you could keep. And so, Rome may say you are required to give a certain level of taxation, but if you can get by with taxing more than that, you give to Rome what Rome was owed, you can keep the rest.
And so, tax collectors were not only those that betrayed, they were cheats and liars in regard to this thieves and absolute, complete outcasts.
[39:25] Why in the world is Jesus calling tax collector to be an apostle? And then, once he gets up and follows Jesus, the very next thing Matthew does is he holds a big banquet and he calls all of his tax collector buddies to come.

Why? Because they're the only friends he had. And the religious leaders say, Jesus, why did you go have a meal with tax collectors and sinners?
Why are you hanging around those people? And the answer is, because he came to seek and to save that which was lost. It's not those who think they're righteous that I came to save.
I came to save those who know they're lost. It's not the healthy that need a doctor. It's the sick who need a physician. And Matthew, who would have been hated in his own time by his own people of all things, not only is he called to be one of the twelve apostles, but for church history, whenever someone hands you New Testament and you say, I wonder what this, what's the first word here of the New Testament you want me to read?
It's a gospel written by who? Matthew. Not tucked away at the back. Not back in the concordance where nobody reads it.
[40:49] It's first. It's a loud clanging siren saying, all outcasts who believe are welcome.

Aren't you glad? You're an outcast? You an outsider? If you would repent and believe in the Lord Jesus, you're welcome.
You're welcome. And Jesus isn't ashamed of those who follow him, and he doesn't try to gloss over their weaknesses. He just puts them front and center and says, these are my guys.
Amazing. And then, eighth, Thomas. Now, I want to help you guys out here because I am a little nervous that you're going to get to heaven one day, bump into Thomas, and I just don't want you to put yourself in a bad spot here in heaven, hypothetically, okay?
Don't think it's funny or original to say, hey, how's it going, doubting Thomas? It's true, he's known for his doubts, but it's quite unfair. there.
[42:11] That was one snapshot of his life. There was a lot more to him than that. But I suspect some of you can relate to Thomas quite well.

Because some of you have something in your past, and you feel like everybody from your hometown only sees you because of that mistake.
Or maybe it's sin in your life, and for a season of your life, you were living rebelliously in sin against the Lord, and you've since repented, and you've since grown from that, and the Lord has changed you by His grace, and yet there are still people in your life who look at you and want to remind you of your past sin.

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then, maybe it's not the people in your hometown. It might be you. Maybe you are the one who has a hard time getting past what you've done in the past.
Maybe you're the one reminding yourself of who you were and what you did, and you keep telling yourself, the Lord can't use you, the Lord can't forgive you.
[43:44] Thomas is helpful for us. He was also known as Didymus. It's a word that means twin. He must have had a twin sibling. The sibling's not identified.

Known as the doubter, but again, there's more to it than that. But let me just show you a little bit of his life. Turn with me real quick, if you would, to John 20. John 20.
Just turn to the right a few pages. John 20. John 20, verse 24.
Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came. This is after the resurrection. So the other disciples told him, we have seen the Lord, but he said to them, unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger in the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.
Eight days later, his disciples were inside again and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, peace be with you.
[45:12] And then he said to Thomas, put your finger here and see my hands and put out your hand and place it in my side. Do you, do not disbelieve, but believe.

Now stop just a minute. Do you notice what Jesus has done with him? He doesn't say, your faith wavered, you doubted, you struggled, I'm done with you.
He doesn't say, you've disappointed me one too many times, you're kicked out. He says, I know who you are, I know your heart, I know you're struggling.
I want you to believe. And he deals with the issue of his heart, but he does it with grace.
Do not disbelieve, but believe, verse 28, and Thomas answered and said, here's the part of Thomas' life that's often overlooked. He said, my Lord and my God.
[46:31] If you see Thomas in heaven, before you mention his doubting, mention his confession, he believed. And before you're so quick to condemn him, just understand he's not the first person whose faith has wavered and been challenged under the backdrop of persecution and pain.

Jesus said to him, have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believed. Christ extols the importance of faith and of belief.
That's Thomas. Imperfect. But while most people are quick to remember that scene, turn back to John 11.
Look at John 11 for just a minute. Look at verse 5. Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.
So when he heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this, he said to the disciples, let us go to Judea again. The disciples said to him, Rabbi, the Jews were just now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?
[48:01] Jesus says, we're going to go. And his followers said, we can't go there. They're trying to kill you. You're a marked man. There's people that hate you now. And they're trying to take your life.

And if we go with you and they're throwing stones at you, one of those stones may miss you and hit me right in the head. Not sure we want to do this. Verse 9.
Jesus answered, are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble because he sees the light of this world. But if anyone walks in the night, he stumbles because the light is not in him.
And after saying these things, he said to them, our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him. And the disciples said to him, Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover. But Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought he meant that he was in rest in sleep.
Then Jesus told them plainly, Lazarus has died, and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe, but let us go to him.
[49:05] Now Thomas, called the twin, said to his fellow disciples, let us also go that we may die with him. Doubting Thomas?

Yeah, one day, but how about courageous Thomas? The other disciples say, look, if we're with this guy, we're going to get killed.
And Thomas says, okay, I'll go with you. We'll go die with you. See, just like you, there's more to Thomas than just one day of his life.

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Just like you, he's a mixture of strength and weakness, of courage and doubt, of bravery and struggle.
And can I remind you, my friends, just like everyone else in your spiritual family too. Listen, let's not ever be afraid to call sin, sin.
[50:27] Let's not ever wink at sin and pretend it's small. Let's not be afraid to say the hard things, okay? At the same time, let's give much grace to people who have been forgiven.

it. If the Lord can forgive their sin, who are you to hold on to it? Are there some days in your life where we can look at a snapshot of your life and say all kinds of bad things about you and be saying the truth?
Sure. But that's not the totality of who you are. Did Thomas doubt?
Yeah. He's also the one guy saying if it costs us our life, let's go anyway. So just understand and hear me say this.
Don't be the person quick to remind everybody of their worst moment. I'm not suggesting you overlook anybody's sin.
[51:41] I'm not saying in any way that we don't deal with sin. Of course we do. What I am saying is someone in your life or someone that you graduated with or someone in your family or someone in this church and you know their worst moment and you know their worst decisions don't act like that's all of who they are.

God's grace forgives. God's grace transforms. Let us be quick to give grace and let us emulate our Savior by doing so.
The third group, James, the son of Alphaeus, also known as James the Less. How do you like that one? Hello, I'm James. James, I've heard so much about you. No, not him.
That's James the Less. The James you want's over here. Anybody feel like that? Some of you feel like you go through your whole life with everybody saying, oh, I thought there would be somebody else.
Mark 1540 refers to him as James the Less. Sure, he loved that. The word is mikros. It means little. So, it's not that people thought he was less important.
[53:04] Just needed to remind people he's small. That's fun, isn't it? Well, you're so-and-so's brother.

Well, look at you. I thought you'd be taller. Thank you. Well, look at you. Such a scrawny fellow. Your brother's so strong. Not you. Thank you. Some of you have been through that.
Maybe he was small. Maybe he was young in age. If you do a research paper on who James the son of Alphaeus is, good luck. You won't find much.
The best we can say is he's a disciple who was called to be an apostle and follow Jesus, which is not a bad thing for people to know about you.
We live in a world where everybody wants to be famous. Everybody wants to be known. What are you famous for? Well, because everybody knows me. Why do they know you? Because I'm famous.
[54:03] And you're just like, what is our culture doing? Why are you a millionaire? Oh, because everybody knows you. What do they know you for? Because what have you done? What have you accomplished? What have you done for society?

What have you done for society? Just kill themselves to be famous. The only thing I can tell you about James the Less is he was probably small.
He was overlooked. And he was a follower of Jesus. My friends, do not live your life to be famous from this world.
Don't do it. It's not a bad thing for people to say of you, I don't know anything about them other than this.
They seem to really love Jesus. That's all people know about you? That's plenty. You don't need a big paycheck.
[55:03] You don't need a big name. You don't need to be renowned in any circle. But if somebody knows you, let them at least say, that person loved Jesus.

Think about that. Every year at graduation time, you go to a large school graduation, and they call a name, and you walk across the stage, you shake a hand, and if it's a large school, they may pause two seconds, second and a half.

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That's it. They got a thousand names to get through. And when that name is called, every student that's there at the graduation, they don't have time to think through a whole lot of things because it's on to the next name.
A name is called, and literally all you have is the first impression of what you think about somebody when that name is called. And I want to say to our students, live your life in such a way that when your name is called, the first thing that comes to your classmate's mind is she loved Jesus.
He was a follower of Christ. They don't need to know your stats. They don't need to know how fast you can run or how high you can jump or how high of an octave you can sing in, but let them know when they hear your name and think of you, that person loves Christ.
[56:35] Thaddeus. Thaddeus, known also as the other Judas, says to himself, man, that guy really ruined it for us.

Some of you relate to that? Some of you go through your whole life trying to escape the shadow of the sins of your parents or the terrible things your sibling did.
Maybe you've got a brother or sister who is known as some kind of a scoundrel when everybody meets you. They don't look at you and think, oh, I bet you're as big and strong and good as your brother. They think to you, I wonder if you're a cheat like your brother.
Or maybe you've got parents or grandparents who are known to have been all kinds of rebellious ways in their living and people look at you and they just automatically assume, I wonder if that's true of you too.
You find yourself living your entire life trying to outrun the shadow of somebody else's sin. The only thing we know really about him comes from John 14 in the upper room discourse.
[57:49] He says, how are you going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world? Then Mark mentions here in chapter 3 in an 11th apostle, Simon the zealot.

This is an unbelievable reality. You know what a zealot was? A zealot was a political designation. A zealot was somebody who wanted to overthrow Rome. A zealot was somebody who was willing to do whatever it would take to overthrow the economic, military, governing authority of Rome. Matthew worked for Rome. Simon the zealot wants to kill people like Matthew.
And Christ called both of them to be an apostle. One author put it this way. He said at one point in his life, Simon would probably have gladly killed Matthew.
[58:59] But in the end, they became spiritual brethren working side by side for the same cause which was the spread of the gospel. Can the gospel heal deep, divide?

It alone can do that. It alone can do that. One of the beautiful things of the church to me, the body of Christ, are people that have such different backgrounds and such different perspectives and such different weaknesses and such different struggles, but by God's grace are bound together as brothers and sisters in Christ working shoulder to shoulder for the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
It is a beautiful, beautiful thing. It's a lovely thing. One of my dear friends, Dustin Binge, has a book. I recommend it to you. It's called The Loveliest Place about the church. And it's just a reminder the body of Christ is this beautiful gift of God.
We're imperfect people, we're imperfect people, sinners saved by grace, from all different backgrounds and nationalities and giftedness and preferences and opinions about life and philosophies and theologies, all come together and in the gospel of Jesus Christ, all find these truths to unite us.
[60:36] We are all sinners, all as believers saved by the gospel, all forever a part of the family of God, not because of what we have done, but because of what He has done.

And for all eternity, we sing the praise of our King who saved us and who unites us. The church really is the loveliest place.
And then, of course, finally, Judas Iscariot. Judas Iscariot, the man from Cariath, it's a reference to southern Judah. You know how you would describe Judas before the betrayal?
You'd say he was trusted. You'd say he had the respect of his peers.
You would say he's one of the closest people to Jesus walking the earth. That's what you could see. What you could not see is that he was an unconverted man who loved the world more than he loved Jesus.
[62:05] And if it took pretending to love Jesus for a while to get what he wants, so be it. If it takes people thinking I love Jesus in order to get me what I'm looking for, he'll take it.

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Until the end where he will betray Jesus and take the money, one of the most moving, frightful experiences of our group in Israel is we go to the Garden of Gethsemane.
And our group is there and we'll take about an hour and we'll pray and sing and I'll teach a little bit there in the Garden of Gethsemane and it's the place where Christ is praying and where Judas is betraying.
And it's in the same moment so holy and so frightening that one that appeared to be so legitimate could be unconverted.
See, you can be near to Jesus but not belong to him. And you can have everybody else convinced you're real and possess no salvation.
[63:47] So as we close, let me just give you these three things super fast. Number one, God uses normal, common people to do his work.

God uses normal, common people to do his work. Are you normal? Are you common? I know somebody may tell you you're abnormal but are you just a regular person?
Good. That's who God uses. Normal, common people to do his work. Number two, there's not just one personality or giftedness that the Lord uses.
There's not just one personality or giftedness the Lord uses. Are you glad about that? You don't have to be able to sing. You don't have to be comfortable to preach in front of a thousand people. You don't have to be able to do anything other than what God has created you to do. We need servants to do the work that God's called them to do. You may preach like Peter and you may one by one bring others to the Lord.
[65:04] You may preach like Peter and get three thousand converts or you may preach like Stephen and get three thousand rocks hurled at your head. Just be faithful.

Preacher, Sunday school teacher, choir member, instrumentalist, greeter, rockin' babies, visiting hospitals, prayer warrior, making quilts for new moms, faithful giver.
Just do what God has equipped you to do and called you to do. You don't need to do ministry like somebody else. Just do what God has gifted you to do.
Just be faithful. And finally, it was said of the followers of Christ that they turned the world upside down.
It was the message, not the personality that accomplished that. Romans 1, I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power.
[66:34] It's not the preacher, it's not the singer, it's not the teacher, it's not the administrator, it's not the organizer, it's not the giver.

None of those things are where the power comes from. I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation.
God, we thank you today for your word. And I pray that our dear people here in this congregation would be encouraged to see all the different people that you use, the different personalities, the different giftedness, different backgrounds that you use.
We don't have to be somebody else, we just have to be who you've called and created us to be. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. We dismiss here, one thing I want you to be aware of is we've got an interest trip meeting for those that may be interested in going to Albany, New York for a mission trip. That trip is going to be later on in the year. But if you're interested in learning about that mission trip, some of the church plans that we may work with, a little bit of what that trip would include, Jeremy Davis, our associate pastor, is going to be leading that interest meeting.
[67:54] That's going to take place here in just a few minutes. Jeremy, you guys meet in the fellowship center? In the fellowship center. Is that open to everybody? I mean, it is now, but was it supposed to be?

Okay. All right. If you're interested in that, go and find out about what that trip and that work would be like and see if that might be something for you that you'd be interested in. Please look at the back of your bulletin.
We've got baby showers, we've got events for moms, young families, high schoolers going to camp tomorrow, all kinds of things happening. We want you to be a part of the life of our church.
If we can pray for you, if we can serve you, if we can help you with your walk with Christ or help you to know how to get involved in the church, use that connection card, drop it in one of the giving boxes, let us be of assistance any way that we can.

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All right. I love you so much, church. I'm so thankful for you. So grateful to walk these days together with you. Love you dearly. God bless you. You're dismissed.

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