

Jesus calls us to be with him

→ Mk 3,14-18

To be called by Jesus

To be a follower of Jesus means first of all to be with Jesus, and only then to preach and act in his authority. What does it mean and how can it be possible to stay close to Jesus?

A. Me: An impressive biblical passage

B. We: As a church we built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets ...

C. God: Jesus ...

1. ... calls people as followers
2. ... shapes followers
3. ... sends followers
4. ... and what a crazy group of people?

D. You: Jesus calls you, shapes you and send you

E. We: Together as a church of crazy people on a mission

Prayer

A. Me: An impressive biblical passage ¹

Do you have a favourite bible passage? A bible passage you know exactly, and you often think about it? Today's passage is deeply carved in my memory.

On the one hand, 25 years ago, the preacher in my home church preached so enthusiastic about this passage. On the other hand God just made something clear to me.

Let's read the scripture. Mark 3, Verses 13-19:

13 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.

14 He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

15 and to have authority to drive out demons.

16 These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), 17 James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means "sons of thunder"), 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot 19 and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Around 25 years ago the preacher often pointed out the sentence: "*He appointed twelve that they might be with him ...*"

The first task of a follower, of a servant, of a pastor is to be with Jesus. Jesus called us to be with him. First things first. And then: "... *and that he might send them out to preach*".

A German bible scholar says:

"So the main calling of the twelve was to expose themselves as authorized original witnesses to Jesus and his salvation, to let Jesus be Jesus to them" (Pohl 1986:161).

This is also very important for us.

B. We: As a church we built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets ...

¹ Skopus: Jesus calls crazy people people into communion with him and with each other to work for him in the world.

Let's think about it today. Jesus calls to be with him. This passage isn't first an order for us. It is first of all a historical and eschatological report. It's an unique event. This event is a foundation of the whole church. In the whole world. Even for ... in Yangon. Jesus calls 12 disciples. That's where it starts. If you know your bible you realize: 12 disciples. 12 tribes of Israel. 12 scouts which sent Moses to the new land to take it. A strong symbolism. Jesus is starting something new here. He gathers his people under new signs (**Is 11,12f;; Ezk 34,11; Am 9,11f**). His disciples, whom he then calls apostles, are messengers and commissioners of the new messianic community of God (Bayer 2008). Later Paul can write in **Eph 2,19f**:

*19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,
20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.*

Do you notice? This text talks about us. From the people of other nations. From the Germany. From the Burmese people. From the Shins and all of the tribes in Myanmar. People from all nations and tribes form the worldwide congregation of Jesus. On the basis of the apostles and prophets. Fantastic!

Only the 12 had this special task. On the basis of this knowledge we have no pope in the Protestant churches, for example, who would have any position of precedence. Nor do we have any more apostles, as for example in the New Apostolic Church (cf. Maier 1996:126). These 12 men, also Peter, were the foundation stone. It is laid.

What we still have, of course, is an apostolic task, which is also necessary for the congregation today. And we have, and this must also be emphasized in our church movement, spiritual ministries. The lack of ministry, which can still be found strongly in parts of our church movement, is completely inappropriate. Maybe is just an German problem.

Jesus calls 12 leaders out of the mass of disciples who have followed him (Bayer 2008:180). Within this circle of leaders there was clearly also a hierarchy. Peter, James and John are always mentioned first and had a special position in the circle of disciples. From these beginnings' ministries were formed within the early church: Supervisors, elders, deacons, bishops, ... There is nothing against it, as long as the so-called priesthood of all believers does not suffer from it.

In the following I would like to go deeper into the text with you and show what we can learn from this unique event for today. Four aspects can be clearly filtered out from the Bible text:²

C. God: Jesus ...

1. ... calls people as followers

² „Daraus ergeben sich z.T. Besonderheiten, die nicht ohne Weiteres auf die Nachfolger Jesu im 21. Jh. zu beziehen sind ... Aufgrund von Mk 8,34 wird jedoch deutlich, das Jesus *beabsichtigt*, die Nachfolge der Zwölf auch auf die Nachfolge des Hörenden zu beziehen. Es bestehen gemeinsame Grundlinien dessen, was Jesus an den Zwölf, an den vielen Nachfolgern z.Z. Jesu sowie an heutigen Nachfolgern bewirkt“ (Bayer 2008:180f). Laut Maier (1996:127) ist diese Einsetzung zu unterscheiden von 1,16f und 2,13f, wo es sich um normale Eintritte in die Jüngerschaft oder Nachfolge handelte. Hier geht es um die Berufung in einen Leitungskreis. „*You might not be a preacher, but He has called you to serve Him too! In fact, He calls every person He saves into His service, Eph. 2:10; James 2:18. When He saved you, He gifted you and gave a place in the body of Christ, 1 Cor. 12:7-26. I encourage you to seek His face, find your gifts and get busy for Jesus! ... Now, while God only calls some to be preachers; He calls all His children to be witnesses! When He saved you, He placed His Spirit within you. When the Spirit came in, He gave you a testimony share and a commission to share it, Acts 1:8. So, while you may never stand in a pulpit and preach a sermon, you can still preach the Gospel everywhere you go to every creature you encounter, Mark 16:15. Jesus still wants His disciples to declare His message!*“, online unter http://www.sermonnotebook.org/mark/Mark%2015%20-%20Mark%203_13-19.htm (20.01.2018).

Jesus climbs a mountain. This is easy to read, but there is a great symbolism behind it. Mountains are often significant in the Bible and often stand for a special encounter with God that people had on mountains. So, Jesus takes time before this important decision in the history of salvation to discuss the matter with his father. Jesus is a good example for us here.

From the group of his many followers, he calls twelve special disciples, the apostles. And they came. Jesus calls, but people must also come. And also, a Judas came. Even today Jesus still calls people. Perhaps he will call you this morning. Perhaps he is calling you to come to him for the first time. Or he is calling you for a special task. When Jesus calls you, then come!

The second aspect is this:

2. Jesus shapes followers

Jesus wants to shape his disciples. He act like a Jewish rabbi at that time who lives with his disciples. His twelve apostles will go with him. What the disciples will experience over the next three years is a very intense communion with Jesus. Three years at the master's side. School of life.

But Jesus also wants to shape us. Disciples of Jesus should learn from Jesus. To imitate him. To follow in his footsteps. He wants us to become more like him. That we let him determine all our thoughts and actions (**Rom 12:1f**). That we imitate him (imitatio christi). That we ask: What would Jesus do?

How can Jesus influence us today? He influences us ...

- when we come to the worship-service (Heb 10:25).
- when we we speak with God in prayer (1Thes 5:17)
- when we read the word of God, our bible (2Tim 3,16)
- when we are giving room to the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; Romans 8:9f).

The Spirit grows fruit in our lives. He changes us more and more in his image (Rom 8,29). We live differently. We speak differently. We think differently. We watch television differently. We surf the Internet differently. We meet our neighbours differently. We educate our children differently. We talk differently about others. We treat our parents differently. The truth is sacred to us. Life too. We work for peace and justice. We proclaim the good news that Jesus saves sinners.

- And another thought, how Jesus influence us: By letting ourselves be shaped by the community (**Phil 2:3; Gal 5:26**). Jesus is calling a troop. The disciples were not only influenced by Jesus, but also by one another. That is what is wanted.

Thirdly:

3. Jesus sends his followers

Sure, the close connection to Jesus has a goal. Jesus wants to send his disciples. First of all, again especially the twelve apostles, but of course also us. God's Spirit gives us gifts to build up His church. Everyone should and is allowed to participate in the congregation. Some of us are evangelistically gifted. Others can lead the music. Some have the gift of serving and helping and work in the background. Others are financially blessed or have the gift of mercy.

Bring in your gifts. Watch less television. Gamble less on the mobile phone. Get more involved in the community. Why? Because Jesus invites you to do so. And because there is so much to do! And because Jesus wants to reach the world through us.

People must be saved. The world is dark and according to Jesus we are the light of the world. So, shine into this world. Salt this world. And that is what we do together.

This brings me to the last aspect of the text:

4. Jesus sends people - ... and what a crazy group of people?

Jesus is putting together a totally crazy group here. It's a mix that doesn't work at all. Just to name a few things:

- Most of these disciples must have been very young. For the ministry for Jesus age does not play a role.
- In this group there are three pairs of brothers: James + John, Peter + Andrew, James + Levi-Matthew. Obviously one can also serve God as a family.
- In this group there were tax collectors, resistance fighters, craftsmen, scholars, people from the lake, people from the mountains, thoughtful people, sons of thunder (cf. Maier 1996:129f), disciples with conservative Hebrew names and disciples with modern Greek names (Pohl 1986:163).

Jesus can build his kingdom with the most diverse people. Maybe you think you are a totally weird guy. Welcome to Jesus! Maybe you think you are very smart and intelligent. Welcome to Jesus! Maybe you feel too weak, too feminine, too masculine, too sick, too young, too old. Welcome to Jesus. Bad at math? Never mind! Welcome to Jesus! Super in sports. Super. Welcome to Jesus.

Too much weight. Welcome! Too thin? Come in. Bad accent. Come in! Foreigners. Join the team! Failure? Come even more. Are you a loser, a sinner? Come to Jesus but let the sinning. Everyone is welcome at Jesus. God wants you. With your strengths and weaknesses!

And the crazy thing is: Jesus spent three years with them in the area. And how long are you together. I mean I know you since 2013. Together we serve the Lord!

4. You: Jesus calls you - shapes you - sends you

What a passage. What do you do with it? How may he shapes you. Do you hear the call of Jesus? (**Heb 3:15; Rev 3:20**). You may come to Jesus. You may also come again when you have been away. Do not be Judas. Judas has distanced himself from Jesus. Be rather like the son who comes back to the father.

The message is so simple: Jesus loves us. Jesus shapes us. Jesus sends us. It is a cycle. Again, and again Jesus loves us, no matter how we are and what we have done. Again, and again Jesus shapes us. Every Sunday we gather here. What for? To the mission! Jesus sends us and into our everyday life as his disciples.

It begins with love. He calls us to be with him. We must let Jesus be Jesus to us.

5. We: Sent together as disciples by Jesus

Jesus loves us, that's why he calls us, that's why he sends us as a colourful worldwide church. In Germany, in Europe, in Asia, in Myanmar.

Different tribes, men, women, children, teenagers, workers, doctors, old people, young people, a crazy troop that didn't choose. Friends can be chosen. Family can't be chosen. Let's fulfil the mission together. But first of all: Be with Jesus. Be at the grapevine. Because we are the branches. He is the true vine.

Amen