

Main Idea: The master plan of the Master involves two objectives, as demonstrated by Jesus’ actions in Mark 3:7-19.

- I. Jesus cares for the crowd (7-12).
  - A. Some want to kill Him (6).
  - B. The majority want to be near Him (7-10).
    - 1. Jesus healed to show His credentials.
    - 2. Jesus healed to give a sample of His coming kingdom.
    - 3. Jesus healed to gain attention for His Word.
  - C. The evil spirits know the truth about Him (11-12).
- II. Jesus concentrates on making disciples (13-19).
  - A. Jesus reveals His sovereignty (13).
  - B. Jesus reveals His strategy (14-15).
    - 1. Selection: He appointed the twelve.
    - 2. Association: He allowed them to be *with Him*.
    - 3. Reproduction: He equipped them to do what He did.
  - C. Jesus reveals His sufficiency (16-19).
    - 1. He picks unqualified people.
    - 2. He does what’s necessary to qualify them.

Make It Personal: Two questions...

- 1. Are you in need of the Master’s care?
- 2. Have you responded to the Master’s call?

Mark presents Jesus to us as The Servant. It’s amazing to watch The Servant at work. He came not to be served, but to serve, ultimately, by giving His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Oh, how we need Him! We need His ransom payment. We also need His example.

*Scripture Reading: Mark 2:23-3:6*

I read a story about a lawyer and a doctor who for years regularly played golf together. They were evenly matched, and there was a keen sense of rivalry. Then one spring the lawyer's game suddenly improved so much that the doctor was losing regularly. The doctor's efforts to improve his own game were unsuccessful, but finally he came up with an idea. At a bookstore he picked out three how-to-play golf texts, and sent them to the lawyer for a birthday present. It wasn't long before they were evenly matched again.<sup>2</sup>

Over the years there have been tons of books and articles and blog posts written to give strategies for Christian living and church life. Some are helpful, but quite frankly I’m weary of how so many resources sound good when you read them and die when placed back on the shelf.

We’re going to talk about master planning today. But instead of considering human opinion, we’re going to investigate the master plan of the Master Himself. We’re going to look at Jesus, specifically at the methodology He utilized in His ministry. It’s quite uncomplicated, refreshingly so. As demonstrated by Jesus in Mark 3:7-19, the Master’s master plan involved two objectives. This was Jesus’ strategy:

#1: Care for the crowd (7-12). #2: Concentrate on making disciples (13-19).

---

<sup>\*\*</sup>Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

<sup>1</sup> For a previous look at this passage, see the Mark series in 2004.

<sup>2</sup> [Bits & Pieces, March 3, 1994, pp. 22-23.](#)

We've been working our way through the gospel of Mark and we're about to see a change in focus for Jesus. Note two key statements in our text, the first in Mark 3:7, "Jesus withdrew with His disciples." And the second in verse 13, "And He went up on the mountain and called to him those he desired."

Until now Jesus has been with the crowds, preaching, healing, and doing miracles. But now His focus begins to transition from public ministry to private ministry, from the masses to twelve men. As we'll see the crowds kept following Him and when they came Jesus cared for them. But the change is striking. Jesus intentionally left the masses in order to invest His time and energies into a select group of men.

There's the basic pattern of Jesus' ministry, a pattern the Scriptures exhort us to follow. When it comes to ministry here's the first objective.

#### I. Jesus cares for the crowd (7-12).

Jesus cared for people. He *really* cared. That's why in the first place He left His Father's side in heaven to come to earth. He cares for the multitudes. Of course, not everyone reciprocates His care. In fact, the very context of our story makes that clear.

**A. Some want to kill Him (6).** In last week's message we saw the Pharisees choose their religious system over the Savior. They watched Jesus heal a man with a shriveled hand, but they didn't celebrate. Instead, according to verse 6, "Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus."

And of course, this decision by the Pharisees to explore ways to kill Jesus set in motion the deadly plot that inevitably resulted in the cross.

It also led to a change in ministry focus for Jesus. Notice verse 7, "Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea." "To the lake," says the NIV, referring of course to the Sea of Galilee.

Why did Jesus withdraw? Probably because He knew the religious authorities were after Him. No, He wasn't afraid, but He knew the time had not yet come for the final confrontation. Instead, it was time to shift His attention from the multitudes to the disciples, as we'll see momentarily.

So some, namely the Pharisees and Herodians, wanted to kill Jesus. But not all.

**B. The majority want to be near Him (7-10).** Verse 7 says, "Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the sea, and a great crowd followed, from Galilee and Judea." This isn't the first crowd we've seen in Mark [see 2:4, 13]. Jesus' popularity was growing rapidly. And now, it's not just in Galilee, either.

According to verse 8, they came from "Jerusalem and Idumea and from beyond the Jordan and from around Tyre and Sidon. When the great crowd heard all that he was doing, they came to him."

Keep in mind it's a hundred mile journey from Jerusalem to where Jesus is. Idumea is the ancient country of Edom to the southeast. The regions across the Jordan indicate people were coming from the east. Tyre and Sidon were Phoenecian cities on the Mediterranean coast, northwest of Galilee.

So now people are coming to Jesus from the south, the east, and the northwest, from regions where Jews *and* non-Jews lived. This is significant. The Lord's popularity has moved beyond the "religious" crowd to the common folk.

Verse 9 says, "And he told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, lest they crush him..." The boat served two purposes. For starters, He could use

the boat as a floating platform from which to teach the multitude (as He did in 4:1). In addition, the boat offered safety in case the crowd control got out of hand. And apparently, it nearly did.

Verse 10 says, "...for he had healed many, so that all who had diseases pressed around him to touch him." So now the sick people aren't even waiting for Jesus to touch them. They're rushing to touch Him. The NIV says, "those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him."

So the majority of people want to be near Jesus. That's a good thing, right, to want to be near Jesus? Not necessarily. Unfortunately, then as now, crowds can gather for lots of reasons, not all noble. In this case, many saw Jesus as a miracle-worker, and little more than that. They wanted to get something out of Him but had no intention of following Him.

Yet graciously, Jesus still healed many, in spite of their selfish motives. Which raises the question, *why did Jesus heal people?* What was the purpose of His miracle-working, particularly His miracles of healing?

The short answer is that the Lord three basic reasons in mind when He healed.

1. *Jesus healed to show His credentials.* His love. His power. His wisdom. He put these attributes and more on display when He healed the sick. In so doing, He fulfilled Old Testament prophecies that pointed to the Messiah.

Do you remember what Jesus did when John the Baptist, while in prison, began to waver? John sent messengers to Jesus asking, "Are you the one, the Messiah, or should we expect someone else?" Matthew 11:4-6 tells what happened. Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."

If you're wondering if I'm the Messiah, says Jesus, look at the miracles I've done. They speak for themselves. So Jesus healed to show His credentials.

2. *Jesus healed to give a sample of His coming kingdom.* Why is there sickness and disease in the world anyway? It's because the first man and woman on the planet sinned and brought God's curse on the created order. *For the wages of sin is death.*

But God sent His Son, Jesus the Christ, to reverse the curse. At His first coming, Jesus removed the penalty of sin through His death on the cross. When He comes again, He will remove the very presence of sin. He will reclaim this sin-cursed world and establish the kingdom of God, and there will be no more pain, sorrow, and death.

That's what He will do in the future, when He comes the second time. But at His first coming He gave a foreshadowing of His kingdom power. He restored maimed limbs with a touch. He made the flesh of a leper as smooth as an infant's. He enabled the blind to see. He even put life back into dead corpses. Why? It's like watching a movie trailer, a sampling of what you can expect to see once the full length feature hits the big screen.

Oh, my friend, this is what's coming. Look at what Jesus did. This is the trailer. Doesn't it make you long for the feature?

3. *Jesus healed to gain attention for His Word.* "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." That's what Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, quoting Deuteronomy 8:3. The miracles were a means to an end. Yes, we have physical needs. We need bread when we're hungry, and healing when we're sick. But our greatest need is for the Word of God. That's why Jesus healed. That's why the

apostles later healed. That's even why God at times heals today. So that people will see and be drawn to their greatest need, to His Word. His written Word, the Scriptures, which reveal His Living Word, which is His Son.

Oh, how we need the Word. It's where the miracles of Jesus point us, if we follow them in the direction He intended.

Next, in verses 11-12, we meet a third group and a third reaction to Jesus.

**C. The evil spirits know the truth about Him (11-12).** Notice verse 11, "And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, 'You are the Son of God.'"

It's ironic that although the crowd didn't grasp Jesus' identity, the evil spirits did, "You are the Son of God!" In Mark's gospel, the demons are the only ones to refer to Jesus by this title until the centurion does in 15:39.

The Pharisees wanted to kill Him, the crowd wanted to use Him, but the evil spirits bowed before Him. They knew the truth. They'd seen Him before, even before He came to earth. They could see past the veil of flesh that hid His true identity. This was the One who created them, the One they had once worshiped as angelic messengers. It's also the One who later cast them from heaven, because of their rebellious association with Lucifer.

Yes, they knew. *You are the Son of God.* And they were right. This account teaches us two important lessons regarding Jesus.

1. *Jesus deserves absolute submission.* They "fell down before Him", says Mark. During Jesus' thirty-three years on earth there was a behind the scenes battle that came into view from time to time. Jesus was literally invading Satan's turf. Satan is a fallen, doomed creature. The Lord has granted him limited freedom to operate his wicked plan, but his days are numbered. And he knows it. He is nervous, as are his forces.

Have you ever turned over a rotting log out in the woods? What did you see? There's a whole world of activity under that log, isn't there? A host of strange looking creatures, and they don't like the light.

That's sort of what happened when the Son came to earth. The Light exposed the creatures who love the darkness. Satan hates the light, but He's powerless in the presence of the Light.

Don't miss those words. Mark says *they fell down before Him.* This is what Jesus deserves. Absolute submission. From the demons. From us. But of course, why wouldn't you want to submit to the One who used His power for your good, who came to this world because He loves you, who died in your place because His heart goes out to you? So not just submission, but loving submission. This is what Jesus desires and deserves.

2. *Jesus doesn't need the devil's help.* Notice verse 12, "And he strictly ordered them not to make him known." Mark doesn't tell us why He gave this order. Maybe it's because Jesus wanted people to learn the truth about Him from listening to His words and seeing His works, not from the testimony of an evil spirit. Maybe it's because the testimony of these spirits would only confuse hearers and create a bizarre scene. After all, though they were speaking the truth in this instance, they typically speak lies.

Of this we can be sure. When it comes to the Lord's work, the Lord doesn't need the devil's help. There may be a lesson here when it comes to the methods we use for ministry today. Just because something "gets a crowd" doesn't mean we should use it to

advance the gospel. If the method distracts from the message, we shouldn't use the method.

So here's objective #1 in the Master's master plan. Jesus cares for the crowd. He cares for the masses, the multitudes. And so should we. There are people all around us, all around this globe, that we don't know. But they ought to matter to us, as they do to our Savior. And we ought to be thinking of ways to let them know that we care, because He cares.

And yet, that broad focus must lead to something else, a more strategic focus, for our mission can't be fulfilled at the crowd level alone. When you watch Jesus in action you soon see a second objective surface, one that was His primary pursuit.

## II. Jesus concentrates on making disciples (13-19).

In the following scene the Lord reveals three insights that pertain to disciple-making.

**A. Jesus reveals His sovereignty (13).** "And he went up on the mountain and called to him those whom he desired, and they came to him."

Note Jesus' first action here. He *went up on a mountain*. He left the crowd. He distanced Himself from the crowd. So there is something more to ministry than gathering crowds, something much more important.

Why did He go to the mountain? Luke 6:12 says He went there to pray, in fact, He spent the night in prayer. Jesus wanted to get alone with His Father. Why? What was on His mind? The most important decision He would make in His earthly ministry. The decision that would determine (from a human perspective) the future success of His mission. What was it?

Notice what He did after praying on the mountain. Verse 13 says that He "called to him those He desired." Luke 6:13 states, "When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles." Don't miss the Master's sovereignty here. There are two evidences of it.

1. *He does the choosing.* Who came to Jesus? Mark says, "those *He desired*." Luke says that He "choose twelve of them." Jesus later had this to say to these men in John 15:16, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last."

2. *He does the calling.* The text again, "He *called to him* those He wanted." At the heart of discipleship is His sovereignty. He is the Master and Lord. We don't volunteer for His service. He chooses and calls whom He wills.

And what's the appropriate response when He chooses and calls? Mark says, "And they came to Him." When the Savior calls, the sheep hear His voice and follow Him. True sheep love the voice of the Shepherd. They do what He says knowing it's an undeserved privilege to come to Him.

Do you see it that way? Do you consider it a privilege to listen to and follow the Shepherd? Jesus made it clear that discipleship rests, first of all, on His sovereignty.

**B. Jesus reveals His strategy (14-15).** When it came to training the disciples, He chose Jesus used a very specific strategy. And it worked, unlike some of our efforts.

A professional animal trainer by the name of Lori tells the following story: "I was disturbed when my own dog developed a bad habit. Every time I hung my wash out on the clothesline, she would yank it down. Drastic action was called for. I put a white kitchen towel on the line and waited. Each time she pulled it off, I scolded her. After two

weeks the towel was untouched. Then I hung out a large wash and left to do some errands. When I came home, my clean clothes were scattered all over the yard. On the line was the white kitchen towel.”<sup>3</sup>

Our strategies don’t always turn out so well. But since Jesus is sovereign, His does. In verses 14-15, Mark shows us the sovereign Savior’s strategy, “And he appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) so that they might be with him and he might send them out to preach <sup>15</sup> and have authority to cast out demons.”

So the Lord’s strategy involved three phases: selection, association, and reproduction.

*1. Selection: He appointed the twelve.* Here are a couple of important terms, that are related yet distinct. The terms are “disciple” and “apostle.”

The term “disciple” simply means a “follower.” A disciple is someone who learns by observing and following. We might use the term “apprentice.” The term “apostle” means “one sent” and refers to a person who is sent on an official task with a commission.

We see both in today’s passage (“disciples” in verse 7; “apostles” in verse 14). Jesus had many disciples, but out of that number He selected twelve apostles to be His special ambassadors. Allow me to restate that.

Jesus has many disciples. Jesus appointed twelve apostles. If you are a Christian, you are a disciple, a follower of Jesus. But you’re not an apostle, for as our text indicates, Jesus selected twelve men to be apostles.

How many? *Twelve*, and the number “12” is not coincidental. In Genesis God blessed Jacob with twelve sons, then in Exodus built those twelve sons into a nation consisting of twelve tribes. God chose Israel for the purpose of bringing the Messiah into the world so that all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen 12:1-3). When the Messiah came, He selected twelve men, as Wessel observes, “the new Israel in embryo.”<sup>4</sup>

Ponder this. The church holds a special place in God’s eye in the fulfillment of His redemptive plan. In 1 Peter 2:9 we read about the church’s identity, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, *a holy nation*, a people belonging to God...” The church is a “spiritual” nation of which the twelve apostles were the nucleus.<sup>5</sup>

Dear friends, the church is something special, and I hope you cherish it. Right now, in this text, we’re seeing the Master Builder lay its foundation.

Take a journey to the final book of the Bible, and who is mentioned in the description of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city? Revelation 21:14 says, “The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the *names of the twelve apostles* of the Lamb.”

J. D. Jones suggests that “the whole fabric of the Christian Church bears forever upon it the stamp and impress of these men who laid its first foundations.”<sup>6</sup> The Lord Himself understood how critical this choice of the Twelve was. Remember, He prepared for it by spending the preceding night in prayer.

So His strategy begins with, phase one, selection. Jesus appointed the Twelve.

*2. Association: He allowed them to be with Him.* Notice again verse 14, “So that they might be with Him.” That little word “with” speaks volumes, for it indicates the

---

<sup>3</sup> Lori Andersen, *Reader's Digest*.

<sup>4</sup> Wessel, p. 642.

<sup>5</sup> Wiersbe, p. 119.

<sup>6</sup> J. D. Jones, p. 60.

Lord put these twelve men in close contact with Himself, and gave them continual opportunity for observation and interaction.

It points to the kind of association that produces resemblance (and that's the goal of disciple-making). Jesus made an intentional decision to invest Himself into these twelve men. They would be together constantly until He returned to heaven. They would eat together, travel together, have late night talks together. They would be *together*.

Let this sink in. If we're going to disciple someone—and as we'll see disciple-making is our assignment—it takes more than meeting together once a week. This is a life-on-life investment. Jesus invested three years into these men. He discipled them, and then unleashed them to serve as His apostles.

By the way, here's an important reality to keep in mind. Jesus is the only disciple-maker. He's the only Person who can make a disciple all by Himself. If someone spends three years with me, and I'm their only source of spiritual input, they may end up being a clone of me, but they won't be a good disciple of Jesus. No *one* person besides Jesus can disciple another by Himself. No one disciple of Jesus possesses all the gifts and wisdom necessary to develop a disciple. Only Jesus has that ability. And this is why today, disciple-making is the task of Jesus' Body, the entire Church, for the gifts necessary for discipling are distributed to the whole Body.

So when you lead someone to Christ, make it your aim to get them connected to His body, the church, as soon as possible. Only Jesus can make a disciple, and the church is His body.

Here's the Master's strategy. First, selection. Second, *association*.<sup>7</sup>

3. *Reproduction: He equipped them to do what He did.* Mark says in verse 14, "That he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons."

That's interesting. What's significant about preaching and casting out demons? That's what Jesus has been doing up to this point. And He intends for these same two activities to continue on earth after He returns to heaven. He will continue to preach and rescue people from demonic control, and He will do it through the efforts of these men, these apostles.

And that's precisely what happened. Around AD 30 Jesus died on the cross, rose again, and returned to heaven. Shortly thereafter, God the Holy Spirit came and birthed the church into existence, and as Ephesians 3:20 says, built upon the "foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone."

Jesus reproduced Himself. That wasn't coincidental, but intentional. He selected twelve men, poured His life into those men, and then commissioned them to reproduce. And they did.

But this ministry of reproduction didn't end with the apostles. In and through the church, the ministry of reproduction continued. Indeed, it *continues* to this very day.

E.g.—

But to really appreciate Jesus' disciple-making strategy, we need to take a closer look at the twelve men Jesus called that day. Mark lists their names for us, and that list reveals a third insight regarding Jesus.

---

<sup>7</sup> Acts 1:21-22 "Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the *men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us*, beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

**C. Jesus reveals His sufficiency (16-19).** “He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter);<sup>17</sup> James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder);<sup>18</sup> Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot,<sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.”

When you look carefully at this list, you notice two bottom line realities.

1. *He picks unqualified people.* These men weren’t wealthy. They had no special education. They lacked positions of power and influence in the community. They were indeed twelve ordinary people.

It’s easy to lose sight of this. We know the rest of the story regarding Peter, John, Matthew, and the others. We know what they became *later*. But that’s later. At this point in Mark 3, these are twelve very ordinary, very unqualified people.

If you were forming a team to change the world, you probably wouldn’t select these twelve men. Four of them were fishermen (Peter, Andrew, James, & John). One was a member of a radical and violent political party (Simon the Zealot—Josephus called this party “the daggersmen”!). One was a hated tax collector (Matthew). Of six of them we know almost nothing. There wasn’t a preacher or expert in the Scriptures in the whole bunch. All were laymen.<sup>8</sup>

That’s not to say that personalities and backgrounds don’t matter, for they do. The Lord uses everything about us for His purposes. He doesn’t waste any of it. But He doesn’t need it, any of it. Indeed, He doesn’t need us, for He is truly sovereign.

So be encouraged, my friend. And put your total trust in Him, and watch what He can do with your life.

J. D. Jones makes this interesting comment regarding the role of the apostle, “He was not primarily to be a theologian; his business was to be a witness, a witness to facts about Jesus, and especially to the great fact of the Resurrection. And when it comes to witnessing, the testimony of the plain, homely, unimaginative man is the most impressive of all. Now the apostles were men of that type. They were not subtle men, they were not imaginative or romantic men; they were not at all likely to confuse subjective experience and objective fact; they were men of a prosaic and literal type of mind, and therefore admirably fitted to be trustworthy and convincing witnesses.”<sup>9</sup>

But the bottom line remains. Jesus *picks unqualified people*. It’s not just then, either. He still does. It’s true of us. He didn’t choose us because we’re smart, or have business savvy, or money, or education, or because we brought anything else to the table. The truth is, we didn’t have what it takes to do His kingdom work, and in ourselves, still don’t.

What we have...is *Him*. And when we have Him, we have all we need.

My friend, this is how Jesus works, then and now. He picks unqualified people. But praise be to His name...

2. *He does what’s necessary to qualify them.* He changes names—Simon to Peter. He changes associations. He changes hearts. And the changes He calls for, He makes possible.

How does He do it, this qualifying work? How does He make a disciple? Here’s how. He does it *by teaching them*. It’s significant that if you look at Thomas &

---

<sup>8</sup> Wessel, p. 643.

<sup>9</sup> J. D. Jones, p. 64.



Gundry's, *A Harmony of the Four Gospels*, you'll find that Matthew 5-7 fits right in between Mark 3:19 and Mark 3:20.

What's Matthew 5-7? It begins, "Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...(Matt 5:1-3).'"

That's the Sermon on the Mount, the sermon Jesus delivered on the mountain to the disciples He chose. He chose them, and then began to teach them very carefully, specifically, about His kingdom, how to enter it, how to share it with others, and what it will cost you.

This is how Jesus turns unqualified possibilities into qualified disciples, by giving them His Word. This is so basic, and so essential. The very next thing Jesus did with these men is *teach them*.

That, my friend, is the Master's master plan. He cares for the crowd. He concentrates on making disciples. And the disciples He makes are very unqualified people, but their lack of qualification is no problem for Him. He Himself does what's necessary to qualify them.

How? Keep reading and you'll see. He lives the kind of life we fail to live, a totally God-pleasing life, and He gives us the merit of His life if we believe in Him. And He dies the death we deserve to die, a horrible death, a criminal's death. And by means of that death, He pays a ransom payment that sets us free.

Yes, the Lord specializes in using ordinary people for extraordinary purposes. That includes us.

Make It Personal: Two questions...

1. *Are you in need of the Master's care?* That's objective #1—care for the crowds. Jesus cares for you today. Are you hurting, in need? Look to Him. Bring your needs to Him. He cares for you.

2. *Have you responded to the Master's call?* His second objective is to concentrate on making disciples. Is He calling you to give allegiance to Him? Have you submitted? Are you willing to do so today? He is worthy.

**Closing Song:** #103 "*Blessed Be the Name*" (all three verses)