

Mark 3:13-19 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; 19 and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house. (NKJV)

Well we are getting to the end of the 12 apostles. Very little is said about some of them so we will move through several this morning.

I wanted to point something out before we begin though. Scripture doesn't tell us a whole lot about these guys. You can be sure if the Bible was an endeavor sponsored by men, there would be all kinds of exploits **written about these men**. There would be spin and truth mixed together. But that is not how the Bible is written. We learn more about these men from tradition, stories passed down by men, than we do from the account of God.

I think in all of this it is important to understand one thing. No one gives up his or her life for something he knows is not true. The stories of the lives of these men, some from scripture and some from tradition, are one of the greatest proofs of the legitimacy and truth of Christianity.

Suppose these men had come together after Christ died. And suppose they came up with a plan to steal his body. And then they came up with a plan to create a religion where they could be hot shot leaders. Suppose they figured out an angle where they could gain something from having been with Christ.

This surely would have gotten them a great deal of attention. And they may have been able to make some money by it. But think about this. Had they done this, and then they had their lives threatened by the authorities for it, how would they have responded?

Do you really think a man that has lied to gain his own selfish advantage will die for the lie even when defending the lie will cost him all of his advantage? A man will not die for something that he knows to be a lie. He is far more likely to tell the truth to save his life. And we don't have just **one man** who is willing to die for this belief. **We have 11 of 12.**

These men were not great men, or great leaders, or great anything for that matter. But there is something they experienced that changed their lives. They saw Jesus Christ after He raised from the dead. They didn't expect to. But they did anyway. And then they saw Him ascend into heaven. And then they experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in Pentecost. And from that point on, they were changed men. They were all willing to die for Christ and they were willing to live for Christ. And that only happens to people who truly believe something.

These men knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that Christ was God, Christ was the Messiah, Christ was the lamb of God who died for their sins. And Christ was preparing a place for them. And they were never the same.

We claim to believe those things, but how much does that really change our lives? Do we act like this life is temporary? Do we act like we know that there is a better

life waiting right around the corner for us where we will be rewarded for every faithfulness? We see from the lives of the apostles what it looks like when **we really believe** what we **claim to believe**.

Now Thomas is the next in line.

Thomas was called the twin based on John 20:24 We don't know much about him. We never see anything about Thomas's twin. Let's look at the places where Thomas speaks.

John 10:40 And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was baptizing at first, and there He stayed. 41 Then many came to Him and said, "John performed no sign, but all the things that John spoke about this Man were true." 42 And many believed in Him there. (NKJV)

Now Jesus had been in plenty of places where things did not go so well for Him. But here is a place where He is having lots of good ministry statistics. His popularity is growing. He is far enough away from Jerusalem that there is not much opposition. And Christ's disciples are probably liking this. But look what happens.

John 11:1 Now a certain *man* was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. 2 It was *that* Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. 3 Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick." 4 When Jesus heard *that*, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." 5 Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. 6 So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.

Isn't that an odd statement? Jesus loved them so he delayed 2 more days. Our idea of love is to save people from their pain. We want to make their life situations on this earth better. And that is not all bad. It certainly has its place. But look how Christ loved them. Christ loved them in a such a manner as to seal in their minds that Christ is Lord. He was going to allow their pain to stretch on for a bit in order to accomplish something much better than saving them the pain of losing Lazarus. He is going to prove that death has no power over Christ. Christ is not limited by this small enemy. He can overcome it at will. And Christ loved them enough to allow them to suffer more loss in order to prove to them, for all time, that they can trust Him with their lives.

Pain may seem senseless, but it is not. It is always serving a purpose to the benefit of a Christian. If it was not, God would not allow it. We sometimes cannot tell what that purpose is. But we can be confident, based on God's word, that there is one.

7 Then after this He said to *the* disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." 8 *The* disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?" 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. 10 But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." 11 These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up." 12 Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well." 13 However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep. 14 Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. 15 And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him."

OK, we are really getting the scene set for us. The disciples knew that their lives would be in danger if they went this close to Jerusalem again. The hatred the leaders had for Christ was visible. It wasn't hard at all to know what the leaders **intended** for Christ as soon as they **had the opportunity** to do it. If we were there, we would have likely been afraid of the same thing.

Then look what Christ says. I am glad I wasn't there for the good it will do to you. Jesus really did not see things from our limited perspective. He viewed things from an eternal perspective. And these guys will never forget what they are about to see.

So that is the setting. Christ is going to go into the mouth of the lion. He will not back down. And this is where Thomas speaks up.

16 Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with Him." (NKJV)

I can almost see Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh delivering this line. Let's go too, so we can die too.

There is an element of pessimism to this whole thing. But no more so than we are frequently capable of. Every time when we focus on the bad things that can happen to us, the bad things that have some likelihood of happening to us, aren't we doing the same thing?

And when we regard Thomas, don't we often focus on this part of the story? The negativity that he exudes? But look what he doesn't do. He doesn't throw some fit about why he isn't going to go because it isn't safe and it would be really stupid to go. He doesn't burst into a tirade telling Christ how thoughtless Christ is being or how selfish Christ is for wanting to go even though he will be risking all the apostles lives. Thomas did not make himself the center of this story.

Isn't that what we so often do? We can only see how every event, how every decision affects us? We want to reserve the right to defend our rights.

No, that was not Thomas at all. He said what he was thinking. And there was some evidence that what he was saying would happen, that his fear is legitimate. But he still says, **Let's go**. Let's go. Let's go have fun? No. Let's go make a name for ourselves? No. Let's go with Christ so that, if He is going to die, we can die with Him. Truthfully, if I am going to fail, I would like to fail as well as Thomas. Look at the traits he displays. This would have tested anyone's loyalty. But Thomas doesn't flinch. He is loyal to the death. He is willing to die. This would have tested anyone's courage. The threat was real, not imagined. He doesn't say, this is stupid. I am not going to die for something so stupid. No. He is loyal and courageous. He is willing to go with Christ, even though he honestly believes that **going** with Christ will also mean **dying** with Christ.

Should he have known by now that He could trust that **Christ knew what He was doing**? Maybe. But we have even more promises. And how often do we respond like Christ doesn't know what He is doing? So while Thomas may have been a bit pessimistic, and not had the faith he should have had, he had loyalty and bravery that is admirable.

Next we seen another incident with Thomas.

John 14:1 "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were not so*, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. 4 And where I go you know, and the way you know." 5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"

Poor Thomas. We have already seen that Thomas was willing to follow Christ anywhere to any end. But now Christ is talking about leaving them. And Thomas is devastated. Now Christ is talking in mysteries about leaving and Thomas anxiety level is going up by the minute.

Wait a minute Jesus. How is this going to work out? You might think we know more than we really do. We don't know where you are going. We don't get that. So we sure won't know how to follow.

Thomas does not want to be **denied the opportunity to follow Christ**. He doesn't mind dying for Him, but he does not want **to lose Him**.

You have got to really admire a man like that. What He cares **most** about is being with Christ. That is a very good thing. He missed some points along the way that could have comforted him. But at the end He wants a good thing.

Look what Christ tells him.

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. 7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him." (NKJV)

Christ tells Thomas that the important thing is not where, but who. You say you don't know the way. You are wrong. **You know me** and it is **me** who is the way. If you had known **me** better, you would have understood that. You can relax a bit Thomas. There is something very positive here. I am all you need and I will give you all you need to be with me.

Now there is one more story, and it is probably the most popular story about Thomas.

John 20:24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

So Thomas wasn't with the other 11 guys. We don't know why. Maybe he was lost in morbid thought. He seems to be a kind of melancholy personality, maybe moody and given to negative spirals. Then the disciples tell Thomas they saw Christ.

Given what you have seen of Thomas so far, how prone do you think he would be to allow himself to believe those things that would actually thrill his soul? Have you ever seen him quick to believe anything positive? I think he was the kind of person who had a fragile spirit. The kind who is afraid to hope wrongly, because it hurts too much to have your hopes crushed. He had found, in his experience, to not expect too much and that way he will not get hurt.

So how does he respond? **I will believe it when I see it.** He might have just as easily said, I cannot afford to believe this is true because it will destroy me then if I find out it is not.

Thomas was the kind of person who had a lot better intentions than others would be led to believe. He was his own worst enemy. So it comes out in cynicism. He says that he will not believe unless he can see the evidence.

And what happens?

26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

It looks to me like Christ is not rebuking Thomas as much as he is encouraging him. He is telling Thomas, believe because you can afford to believe. Believing in me will not disappoint you. Hope in me and your hopes will never be crushed. You can let your guard down when it comes to following me. I am safe. I am sure. I love you and you can depend upon it. So don't allow your defenses to drive you to disbelieve. No. Instead determine to believe. Commit to believe. And look how Thomas responds.

28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

This is not a reaction of a man who is holding Christ to a standard before he will follow Christ. No. This looks more like a man who is relieved. His heart has wanted to believe this, but He was afraid to. But now that Christ has showed up, Thomas throws away those defenses. And his heart cries out in true worship. Jesus. You are my Lord and my God. You are it. You are the center of my universe without reservation. My soul is safe with you. You will not disappoint me..... ever.

29 Jesus said to him, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed." (NKJV)

There are a lot of people who have to get where Thomas got without having some of the advantages. They must learn that their soul is safe with Christ by reading and being convicted of these truths, without Christ showing up in person to solidify those beliefs. And those people are very blessed. It seems like Christ is saying, I understand the obstacles. They are not easy to overcome. And those who overcome without my physical presence are even more blessed than you are Thomas.

Thomas probably went as far as India ministering for Christ. Tradition says he was martyred by being run through with a spear. Doubting Thomas was evidently cured of his disbelief when his soul was thrilled with the truth of Christ's resurrection.

James the less

In Mark 15 this James is referred to as James the less. Lesser might mean short in stature or younger or less prominent. This James was definitely less prominent than the other James. But we really don't know what Lesser refers to, so we won't make much of it.

We are told that James was the Son of Alphaeus. We are also told in Mark 2:14 that Matthew was also the son of Alphaeus, so it may well be that Matthew and

James were brothers. That wouldn't be too shocking given all the friendships in the fishermen apostles.

Oddly enough, we are told more about James's mother than we are about him. And his brother Joses is mentioned twice, although we are never told anything about him.

Mark 15:40 **There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, 41 who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. (NKJV)**
So James' mother was there when Christ was crucified.

Mark 15:47 **And Mary Magdalene and Mary *the mother* of Joses observed where He was laid. (NKJV)**

James' mother saw where Christ was laid.

Mark 16:1 **Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary *the mother* of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. (NKJV)**

James mother came to make burial preparations.

That is the extent to what we know about James the lesser.

Next is **Simon the Zealot**

The word Caananite means to be zealous. These kind of people typically had a fiery zealous temperament.

Josephus laid out four groups of people in his writings describing the politics of the day. There were the Pharisees, the Saducees, the Essenes (these were people who lived difficult lives and focused on God at the expense of fitting into any societal notions. They were kind of like monks) and there were the Zealots.

Zealots hated Romans and wanted to overthrow Roman rule of Palestine. They resorted to a kind of terrorism and violence. They believed that only God had the right to rule. They believed that Jerusalem was God's land. So they should not be submitting to these Godless Romans. It makes a lot of sense. Except for the fact that God had often told His people that, after disobeying, it was God's will that they serve other leaders. These people didn't read those parts. These people would be similar to the militia people out in Montana who will fight for the ideal of freedom in the United States. They believed in a self ruled Israel.

Let's read a little that Josephus said about them.

“Of the fourth sect of Jewish philosophy, Judas the Galilean was the author. These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty, and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kinds of death, nor indeed do they heed the deaths of their relations and friends, nor can any such fear make them call any man lord.

And since this immovable resolution of theirs is well known to a great many, I shall speak no further about that matter, nor am I afraid that any thing I have said of them should be disbelieved, but rather fear, that what I have said is **beneath** the resolution they show when they undergo pain. And it was in Gessius Florus's time that the nation began to grow mad with this distemper, who was our procurator, and who occasioned the Jews to go wild with it by the abuse of his authority, and to make them revolt from the Romans."

Eventually the party went underground and took to assassinations to serve their purposes. They were called dagger men and they would stab Romans and soldiers and tax collectors in the back in a way that would be sure to puncture the heart. Some historians believe that the sacking of the temple in AD 70 by Titus was the result of a Roman response to Zealots. During that time Zealots killed the Jews who opted to negotiate with the Romans during the siege.

Can you imagine the dynamics between Simon the **ultra-conservative patriotic zealot** and **Matthew** the person who sold out his countrymen for money? It was no wonder that Christ talked about the need for love so often.

It is interesting that Simon and Judas Iscariot were sometime coupled. They would have had a lot in common and probably wanted some of the same things. But in the end, Simon was loyal to Christ and Judas was found to be a liar and betrayer. Traditions tells us that Simon preached as far as the British Isles and he ultimately died for the Gospel. He was killed for bringing a message of peace. How ironic for a man who very likely came to Christ as a murderer. Never underestimate what the power of Christ can do in a person's life.

And the last Apostle we will look at today is Thadeaus. Thadeaus was referred to with three names. Thadeaus means breast child, Lebbaeus means heart child, and Judas. There is some likelihood that Thadeaus, based on his name might have been a momma's boy. He may have been a favored child. Again, the Apostles truly were just a bunch of real people. It would not be unusual if just about any kind of person was represented there.

Here is the only passage we have where Judas says something.

John 14:19 "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. 20 At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. 21 He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him."

Christ is basically saying that He does not intend to manifest himself to the whole world. He is not going to reveal his true identity to all of them. This is where Judas asks his question.

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"

This seems like a very gentle and humble question. Why would you show us something you will not show the rest of the world? After all, you know us. You know that we are not all that important. Why would you do this? That seems to be the gist of what Judas was asking.

23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. 24 He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me. (NKJV)

Christ will manifest Himself in the way a person can really and truly appreciate it when the Father and the Son comes to this person and makes their home with Him or in Him.

We don't know much about this Judas, but it is likely he was a timid humble kind of person. And the idea that Christ would manifest Himself to a person like Judas and not to all the bigshots and power brokers of the world may have just been astounding to him.

Tradition tells us that Judas went preaching to the North, to Edessa. It would be in modern day Turkey. There is some historical reference that he was used to heal the king of Edessa. And he was likely clubbed to death for his faith.

I think a few apt applications are found in our texts this morning. I think the first is found in Thomas. We often defend our fears and negativity and pessimism with the idea **that the things that we think of and speak of are possible**. They are **real** threats. They **could** happen to us. So we give ourselves permission to become absorbed with those things. And we think that we are just being smart. But when we live in fear and worry and obsessed with what evil could befall us, we have departed faith. God has given us great and precious promises. And He has the power to deliver on each one. So in reality we are foolish and faithless, not smart, when we become fixated on our fears.

We need to learn what Thomas learned. **Our heart is safe to hope in Christ.**

Sure, some evil will befall us. We will without a doubt suffer some of the consequences of living in a sinful planet. But we are kept safe from those things that **will destroy** us in Christ. We are **safe** to fully trust in Christ. We are **smart** to fully trust in His plan for our lives. Our fears will not protect us anyway. They will just steal the joy from us that we could live in today. Our hearts are safe to hope in Christ. He will not let us down.

Another application is that God can use you the way he made you. If you are brash and forceful, God can shape you and use you. If you are timid and bashful, God

can shape you and use you. There is not just one kind of personality that is useful in God's kingdom. All personalities are useful if you will just submit yourself to his guidance. The trick is saying "Yes" to His rule over your life, to submitting your heart to His Lordship and obeying His word. He has a use for you in His Kingdom if you are his. After all, he chose 12 of the most unlikely candidates for leadership in His kingdom, surely he can use one more unlikely candidate for some other purpose.

Next week, Lord willing, we will look at Judas. And then we will move ahead in the Mark text.