



Sunday 27th October 2024
 Choral Evensong
 St Simon and St Jude
 The Rev'd Canon Jenny Wilson

In the name of God, creating, redeeming, sanctifying, ... Amen.

He went up the mountain to pray before choosing the twelve who would work closely with him. This was not at the very beginning of his ministry. In Luke's Gospel, the gospel from which the account we heard read tonight, comes, Jesus is baptised, is tempted in the wilderness, and then soon after stands up in the synagogue at Nazareth and reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah words that describe what his mission and ministry will be about.

*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
 because he has anointed me
 to bring good news to the poor.
 He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
 and recovery of sight to the blind,
 to let the oppressed go free,
 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'* Jesus read.

He embarks on this ministry on his own for a while, healing the sick, casting out demons from the deeply troubled, helping Peter with a catch of fish, cleansing a leper, and provoking the religious leaders by healing a paralysed man with the words, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you." After this, he is walking through grain fields on the sabbath where his disciples are plucking grain, only on the following sabbath healing a man with a withered hand who enters a synagogue where he is teaching. His work inaugurating the kingdom of God has well and truly begun when he goes out to a mountain to pray.

We see this often in the stories of his time on earth, the stories of the one who brings the love and healing and forgiveness of God to the earth. We see it often

that Jesus pauses and goes up a mountain, a God place, to spend time close to the one he calls, “Abba, Father”.

One wonders what he sensed that day. The need for a group of close friends, close friends who would be with him and support his bringing in of the kingdom. He surely knew that they would not really understand, would not last the distance at the awful time he knew lay ahead. But he needed them anyway and they ... they needed to know that he chose them and named them and gave them this precious task. The task of an apostle.

Our apostles this night are better known as the ones who are *not* rather than the ones who *are*. This evening, we celebrate the Feast of St Simon and St Jude. Simon is not Simon Peter, Jesus’ best friend, if you like, the one on which Jesus built his church, the flawed one who misunderstood and panicked and on that dreadful day denied Jesus three times, just when Jesus needed him most. The one who Jesus forgave in such a beautiful way by asking three times if he loved him, to wash away those three denials. Our Simon, Simon the Zealot is not this famous Peter, he is just another Simon, who nonetheless, Jesus chose.

Jude is even more definitely not his namesake, Judas Iscariot. The one who betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, brought the soldiers to arrest him, giving a sign of who Jesus was with that mark of friendship, a kiss. As if any of it was necessary. As Jesus said, you know who I am and where I am. The pointless betrayal ending with a life in despair. No, our Jude is not that troubled man.

Our Simon and Jude are just two others in the list. Two apostles that we know oh so little about. Two of the crew. A bit like most of us really. Members of Jesus’ disciples who are not famous or notable, not dramatically weak or dramatically brave. Just two of the crew.

Only Jesus chose them. Like Jesus has chosen us. He went up a mountain and we can imagine Jesus and God pondering who he was to choose and those twelve

human beings came into his mind and those twelve human beings are the ones are who he chose. Can you imagine Jesus going up a mountain and praying and pondering and God saying, “Choose them” ... and one of them is you. Just like Simon and Jude. Part of the crew.

If we read on in Luke’s Gospel it says that Jesus came down with them, the twelve to a level place where there were many more disciples and also a great crowd who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases and set free from their troubles. He teaches them in that level place and it is quite a while longer before, in Chapter 9 of this Gospel of Luke, Jesus sends them out. Sends the chosen apostles out. Calls the twelve together and gives them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sends them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He says to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.’ So, they depart and go through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

I wonder if Simon and Jude went together ... Those two members of Jesus’ crew. I wonder if they were paired together as we have paired them this night, perhaps as we know so little about them.

Only Jesus chose them. As Jesus has chosen us.

We might ponder that. That we are chosen and sent. What is our ministry I wonder. We will each have it, you know. What did Jesus say? Quoting Isaiah.

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to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent us to proclaim release to the captives

and recovery of sight to the blind,

*to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.*

For what has he chosen us?

Some of us are there for pastoral care for accompanying the sick and the lonely and the troubled. Some of us will work to help bring justice to those who are homeless or captive. Some of us are called to bring justice to first nations people. Some hear the cry of the earth and long to help care for the earth. Some of us are called to teach, to ponder the scriptures with others. Some of us are called to pray, to hold in God's presence the need for peace in the world. For what are we chosen I wonder?

What matters is that like St Simon and St Jude, few of us are famous, few of us will do mighty things. But God has chosen us. Jesus has gone up a mountain and prayed and prayed and God has said, "Choose them." Choose them. We might sit in the stillness of our own places of prayer this night and wonder about that. That God has chosen us.