Congregational Study: Luke's Epiphany
January 30, 2025
Home Study: Luke 6:12-16

INTRODUCTION
Recently, our country's new leaders began service. After a long, bitterly contested election cycle, our land's citizens voted in new governing officials and legislators. While no one would say that our system of selecting our nation's leaders is 100% perfect, or that the leaders we've chosen are flawless, the democratic process continues in the USA.

Choosing leaders, on any level, can be a very tricky process. What criteria do we utilize? Does character count? Is a good reputation a requirement? Especially in the church, it's crucial to have excellent leadership; but it's not always easy to make it happen in a way that pleases everyone.

TODAY'S READING
In our reading for today, we see Jesus selecting leaders for the future church. We'll note, as we read, how Jesus prepared for this selection. We'll be struck by his surprising choices. We may be able to relate to some of the men he picked, too.

Read in your Bible Luke 6:12-16.

Do you think it's an accident, or merely coincidental, that Jesus spent the entire previous night in prayer, before choosing twelve of his disciples to be designated as apostles? Do you think the number twelve was an intentional choice for Jesus? Do you see a parallel between this new group and ancient Israel? Look ahead to Luke 22:29-30.

Luke uses the title "apostles" for this group, emphasizing their role as commissioned representatives of Jesus. He's the only gospel writer to use this title, although Matthew (chapter 10) and Mark (chapter 3) include similar lists of the apostles' names.

Why do you think, in all three listings, Peter is listed first? Why is he such a key figure? Is it because he often speaks for the other disciples, and serves as a representative of the group? Do you think that the others regarded Peter as the "boss," or just as the first among equals?

Bartholomew is very likely the same person as Nathaniel (mentioned in John 1:45), since many Jews had two commonly-used names. Matthew is widely regarded to be Levi, the tax collector we read about last Sunday in Luke 5:27-32. Thomas is the hesitant, questioning disciple who will have to be convinced of Jesus' resurrection (John 20:24-29). James of Alphaeus is a virtual unknown, and Simon the Zealot was

apparently a political nationalist before Jesus came into this life. It's hard to imagine this Simon getting along with Matthew, who as a despised tax collector represented the interests of the hated Roman government. Of course, the betrayer of Jesus, Judas Iscariot, is on the list, as well. Quite a crew!

Why might Jesus have valued diversity in his chosen apostles? Does Jesus expect us all to be the same? How does diversity among church leadership benefit the mission of the church today? In what sense is Jesus the common bond between the twelve apostles, and between all of us in the church today?

Why do you think Jesus selected so many men who were everyday sorts of people (fishermen, tax collector, political activist, etc.)? Why not select the religious elite? How do Jesus' selections show the grass roots character of Jesus' ministry? Do churches like ours tend to make similar selections when choosing leaders? Or do money, status, and power count more? Where do character and integrity fit in, when we're selecting leaders?

Some say that the best leadership is seen not in what happens while the person is still around, but by what develops after that leader has left. If the twelve apostles are measured by this standard, then Jesus' choices were brilliant. These men, of course, went out empowered by the Spirit to shake up the world in the name of Jesus!

PRAYER
Thank you, Jesus, for the twelve apostles, and for the apostolic teaching that forms the bedrock of our beliefs and doctrines in the church today. Continue to raise up great church workers, faithful lay leaders, and willing volunteers to empower your church in this age. Give us joy in serving you and bless the ministry work of our congregation in every way. Amen.