

Dear Christian Friends:

***Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Judas, son of James, and Judas Iscariot.*** - Luke 6:12-16

What decisions will you make today? With some segments of the economy now reopening, it might be whether to go back to work or stay at home. It might be whether to schedule a doctor, dentist, or hair stylist appointment...or wait for another three months. It might be whether to go out to the store or continue to have things delivered. It might be whether to walk around the block clockwise or anti-clockwise. For many weeks we have been limited as to the decisions we've been allowed to make. Now, the freedom to decide brings some very important considerations.

What if you faced a decision that was one of the most incredibly **important decisions** of your life – career choice, marriage, financial planning? What if this decision was important not just for your and your family's future, but for the future of the whole world – like dropping the atomic bomb? What if the decision was going to affect not only people's lives now and in the future, but also their eternal lives? That's the kind of decision Jesus faced when he chose the disciples.

Jesus came to show and teach people who God is and how we are to love God by loving others. He has three years to accomplish this mission; and he knows the people he calls to be his inner circle, the ones he will pass on to essential truths of faith and life, will be the ones who in turn will pass it on to others after he is gone. The people following him are attracted to his surprising words, healings, and miracles; but most of them don't have a clue as to who he is or why he came. So Jesus must decide who to train, so they can continue the ministry after his resurrection and ascension.

Did Jesus think carefully about his choice? Certainly. Did he watch the disciples interact with one another and base his decision on that? Perhaps. Did Jesus deliberately choose to include a variety of personalities, occupations, and religious background in his group of 12 nothing-out-of-the-ordinary guys? So it seems. But what was the principal factor in his decision-making process?

Prayer. Communication with God. Talking it over with his heavenly Father. ***“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” Luke 6:12***

John Bunyan once said, “You can do more than pray after you have prayed, but you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.” Jesus exemplifies this; whenever we see Jesus facing a critical decision, or an important action, he spends extra time in prayer. I don't know if I could stay up all night talking to God – like Peter, James, and John in the garden. I would probably fall asleep! But, for Jesus, prayer becomes more important than food or rest. Prayer was his spiritual lifeblood, his intimate connection with God.

Are you facing an important decision? Are you worried about a choice you must make? First, pray. Second, pray. Third, pray. Think about it, then pray some more. Gather information and input, then pray some more. Talk to your pastor and/or other Christians you respect, then pray some more. “Prayer is not a substitute for work, thinking, watching, suffering, or giving; prayer is a **support** for all the others.” Jesus gives us a model: he prays all night; and then, when it is morning, He goes out and makes his decision.

That the Church is still doing the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ 20 centuries after his death and resurrection means some of those guys came through. Prayers answered!

St. Francis and I are praying for you ~

Pastor Laurie Miller  
Christ Lutheran, Lorain and Redeemer Lutheran, Elyria