



# Benefice of Atworth with Shaw and Whitley

## The Disciples of Jesus: Introduction

19<sup>th</sup> April 2015

1 Corinthians 1: 26 – 31

Luke 5: 1 - 11

### In essence:

- Luke records the names of the twelve disciples (Luke 6: 13 – 16) as follows: *And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.*
- The twelve were from Galilee, by all accounts not a place where movers and shakers were likely to hail from. None was renowned for scholarly learning, none had a track record as an orator of any description or was a theologian in any recognised sense. So far as the religious establishment was concerned they were complete rank outsiders. On top of that lack of credentials they were prone to mistakes, had bad attitude, spoke out of place, had remarkable lapses of faith, and even, seemingly dull-witted on occasion.
- These men were taken from obscurity and became influential leaders that shaped the world we live in today and it all came down to the teacher and the training they received. In a period of around 18 months Jesus turned these ordinary men into extraordinary ambassadors on his account. Jesus chose them, trained them, and discipled them; he showed them how to pray, how to forgive, how to heal, how to love, how to bring good news – how to change the world! All in less time than we take for our GCSEs or A levels never mind a degree course!
- These men were not academic – they were slow to understand, dull and blind to what was in front of them yet Jesus kept teaching them and showing them the way, even after his resurrection. They were lacking in humility, being somewhat self-centred, self-promoting and proud as they discussed among themselves which of them would be greater yet Jesus kept on modelling humility to them. They lacked faith – even after his resurrection Mark records Jesus rebuking them for lack of faith. They lacked commitment; it was all so easy when the miracles were being performed to be enthralled by what they saw but where are they after Jesus is arrested? As Mark records “everyone deserted him and fled” but Jesus constantly prayed for them. They lacked power – without Jesus around they seemed helpless and weak, unable to harness the power available to them. Yet Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would empower them and we see the fulfilment of that promise at Pentecost.
- The Aramaic word for apostle was *shaliah*. A shaliah was the official representative of the Sanhedrin ruling council in Israel; they spoke for the Sanhedrin and with the complete authority of the Sanhedrin – not their own message but that of the group they were representing. When Jesus chose the 12 and called them apostles he was choosing them to be his shaliah; in other words he was choosing them to speak with his authority, to deliver his message and to act with his power as we read in Luke 9: 1- 2. Jesus invites us to be his shaliah, his official representative, too!

### For Reflection:

1. **Why do you think Matthew and Luke both recorded the list of the apostles names? Can you name them without looking?!**
2. **Do you feel that you have no particular credentials to make you a disciple or apostle of Jesus? Are you prone to making mistakes, having bad attitude, speaking out of turn, having lapses of faith and somewhat lacking in spiritual understanding? Jesus still chooses you to follow him!**
3. **What qualifications if any do you have? How long did it take to get them? The disciples had around 18 months learning from Jesus. How long have you followed Jesus?**
4. **How might being a shaliah, official representative, of Jesus look for you?**