

---

**Sons of Thunder**

**Mark 3:17**

**Steve Hereford, Pastor-Teacher**

**Sermon Transcript By: <https://riverside.fm/transcription>**

**00:00**

We are currently in a study of the 12 disciples. In Mark chapter 3 we saw in verses 13 through 15 where Jesus called and commissioned his disciples to preach. In verses 16 to 19 Mark lists each disciple by name.

**00:23**

So we're taking a moment to see what the Bible says about each one of these disciples. We've already looked at Peter in verse 16, and now we're considering the two brothers that Jesus called by the Aramaic term, Boanerges, which means sons of thunder. Let me invite you to take your Bible and turn to Mark chapter 3. We're going to be looking at a number of verses this morning.

**00:50**

But just starting in Mark chapter 3 and again in verse 17, we see it says, And James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means sons of thunder.

**01:10**

Who were these two fiery brothers to earn such a title as sons of thunder? I don't know if I'd want to meet anybody with that term or with that title, but as we look at these you'll find some wonderful things about them and how the Lord used them as well. Let's first notice a few things that were true about both of them.

**01:38**

---

Over in Mark chapter 1 and verse 19, you can just flip back a few pages, we find there that he was the son of a man named Zebedee. And they were both part of a fishing business. It says in Mark 1 19 and going a little farther, Jesus saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were also in the boat, mending their nets. They were fishermen.

**02:07**

they had a family business. And the business was obviously big enough for them to even to have hired servants. And we know from Luke 5 verses 10 and 11 that they were partners with Simon as well as with Andrew.

**02:26**

Both of these men, just like Peter, was called to follow Jesus. It says in Mark 1-20, and they went away to follow him. They left everything. And really, that's what we're seeing when it comes to the concept or the idea of following Jesus. It's leaving everything behind. Everything that you hold dear.

**02:56**

everything that's precious to you. You drop everything. And here in this case of these two men, they left their livelihoods to follow Jesus. They left everything. And one of the things that's very important to note about these two men as well as Peter and Andrew, they were the closest, the closest of the three groups to Jesus.

**03:25**

They were the most intimate. We know more about them than we know about the other groups. In fact, when you get to the second group, we have a little bit of information, but when you get to the third group, we don't really know a whole lot about them.

**03:41**

---

but they were part of this inner circle. They appear, as I said, in this first group with Peter and Andrew. Now he says there in chapter 3 and verse 17 that we just read that he gave them the Arabic name, Boanerges, and that means sons of thunder.

**04:06**

And the reason why he gives them this name is because of their fiery and zealous nature.

**04:15**

There was a situation in Luke chapter 9 that took place, and you're probably familiar with it, but let me read it to you. It says, Now it happened that when the days for him to be taken up were soon to be fulfilled, he set his face to go to Jerusalem, and he sent messengers on ahead of him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for him. But they did not receive him because he was journeying with his face toward Jerusalem.

**04:44**

And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, listen to this, Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?

**04:57**

But he turned and rebuked them and said, You do not know what kind of spirit you are of, for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went on to another village. Now do you know where they got their name from? That's pretty zealous, pretty passionate, pretty bold, pretty assertive. Lord, they're not with us. They don't receive you. Want us to call down fire from heaven and consume them? That's pretty brash, isn't it?

**05:25**

That's also not really caring.

---

**05:29**

And you know, when you look at both of these as we do this this morning, it may be that James was more this than John, but understand this, Jesus gave this name to both of them.

**05:45**

It says in Luke 9 54 that when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, they said this, Lord do you want us to call down fire from heaven? They were both involved in this. And when Jesus rebuked, he rebuked both of them. So they were both this. And as they are seen in the Gospels, they're

**06:10**

Personality becomes more visible. Some things about their personalities never change. They just begin to mature as they grow close to Jesus. But isn't that true for all of us? I mean, we don't start out as arriving, and to be honest with you, we don't even arrive in this life. But we're seeking with all of our heart to fulfill what Jesus said in Matthew 5 48, that you shall therefore be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect. And again, that's something that we'll never attain, but we will mature.

**06:40**

as we grow closer to Jesus. But you've got to get with Jesus in order for that to happen, right?

**06:50**

They had a zeal. They had a passion. They were assertive. They were outspoken.

**07:01**

---

But over time, they became loving. They became patient with people. And again, that's something I believe that's true for us. Whatever those quirks are that we have in our life, whatever those things are that the Lord has to purge, and He doesn't just take away everything at one time. Some things He leaves there for them to be worked on in our life.

**07:32**

I remember after I came to Christ, my mouth didn't immediately clean up, but the interesting thing was the Lord put me on a loading dock with a bunch of foul-mouthed men to clean my mouth up.

**07:43**

I was around it all the time.

**07:47**

But over time, I stopped sounding like them. Over time, I stopped doing what they were doing, talking the way they were talking, and it took time. Putting the Word of God in my mind, reprogramming my mind, if you will, transforming my mind by the Word of God. And the same is true for these men. Their zeal and their passion, they retained.

**08:15**

but it became redirected.

**08:20**

We see that when we examine books like 1 John where we hear John mention the word love 46 times. I think he got the message.

**08:33**

---

And why did he mention it so many times? Well, I believe it had to do with what he saw in the life of Jesus. He saw a balance. Let me have you to turn over to John chapter 13. John chapter 13. If you're familiar with John 13, this is the chapter where Jesus washes the disciples feet. Beginning of verse 1 it says,

**09:03**

and that he would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. And during supper the devil, having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from supper and laid aside his garments and taking a towel, he tied it around himself.

**09:32**

And then he poured water into the water basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel which he had tied around himself. So he came to Simon Peter and he said to him, Lord, are you going to wash my feet? And Jesus answered and said to him, What I'm doing you do not realize now, but you will understand afterwards. Peter said to him, You will never wash my feet ever. Jesus answered him, If I do not wash you, you have no part with me.

**10:02**

Simon Peter said to him, Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head. He couldn't think of the idea of not having anything to do with Jesus. And Jesus said to him, He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean. And you were clean, but not all of you. And he knew the one who was betraying him. For this reason, he said, not all of you are clean.

**10:26**

So when he had washed their feet and taken his garments and reclined at the table again, he said to them, Do you know what I have done to you? You called me teacher and lord, and you were right, for so I am. If I then, the lord and the teacher, washed

---

your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example that you should do as I did to you."

**10:55**

So he taught them what true love was really all about by meeting the needs of these men, even washing the feet of the one who was betraying him.

**11:12**

See, this was redirection.

**11:16**

His passion, their passion was redirected. But both James and John experienced this.

**11:26**

just as they experienced other things like the healings and the miracles. One thing that's very notable that they experienced, not to say that any of the others are not, but is found in Matthew 17, and this is when Jesus had transfigured himself before them. You say, well, what does that mean, transfigured? Well look with me at Matthew 17.

**11:53**

Verse 1 says, And six days later Jesus brought with him Peter and James and John, his brother, and led them up on a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun. And his garments became as white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with him. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Lord,

**12:17**

It is good for us to be here, if you wish. I will make three booths here, one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah. And while he was still speaking, behold, a bright

---

cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him." And when the disciples heard this, they, that is Peter, James, and John, all of them, they fell down on their faces and were terrified.

**12:46**

I think the terror began earlier. It just confirmed it when they heard the voice from heaven. And Peter didn't know what to do with all of this, so he just did what he always did. He just kept talking. Comes up with this idea about building booths so that they could dwell there. He didn't know what he was talking about. He's like, you know, being in the presence of the Almighty God as He transfigured. He's standing there going, you know?

**13:15**

You know what to say. And so he comes up with this and you know the Father ignores it and Jesus ignores it.

**13:25**

And so what do you do when you hear the voice from heaven? What do you do when the Lord Jesus Christ shows you all of His glory right there on that mountain? You do what they did. You fall down on your face. You're terrified. But then you have the comforting touch of Jesus in verse 7. Jesus came to them and touched them and said, Get up and do not be afraid. And lifting up their eyes, they saw no one except Jesus Himself alone.

**13:52**

And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man has risen from the dead." Again, another incredible...

**14:05**



---

incredible thing that they witnessed.

**14:10**

I know that there's things that we remember about each of these disciples that stand out and maybe it's this next one. Over in Matthew chapter 20, the mother of James and John came to Jesus with her sons and bowing down and making a request of Him. Matthew 20-21 says,

**14:32**

He said to her, What do you wish? And she said to him, Command that in your kingdom that these two sons of mine may sit one on your right and one on your left. But Jesus answered and said, you do not know what you are asking.

**14:48**

see the thing is is that when he responds he's not responding to her he's responding to them. Look at that. He says you do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I'm about to drink? And they said we are able. Did they even understand what he said? Are they able to die?

**15:14**

Well, everyone's able to die. The question is, are you willing to die?

**15:20**

He said to them, My cup you shall drink, but to sit on my right and on my left, this is not mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my father." And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers, and maybe they became indignant because they didn't come up with the question first. Maybe that they were upset over that.

---

**15:48**

But Jesus called them to himself and he said, you know, that the Gentiles, the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them, it's not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be what? Your servant. And whoever wishes to be first among you shall be what? Your slave.

**16:12**

just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. Listen, you want to be great? Humble yourself. Be a slave. Serve one another. That totally goes against the whole grain of how we're made up. We don't think like that. All we think about is that we want to be served. We don't want to serve.

**16:45**

So he had to teach them about service, as he taught them about love and patience, just as the Lord is doing that for us today, right? He's teaching us how to love each other. He's teaching us how to love our enemies. And you know how you learn how to love your enemies is when your enemies turn on you.

**17:06**

Because when you're at peace with your enemies, you have no opportunity for a lesson there.

**17:17**

say, well I don't want that kind of lesson. Well that's not your choice. You want to be like Jesus?

**17:26**

that he's going to do whatever it takes to make you like him, to humble you, to strip you of your pride.

---

**17:37**

Now all of these things that I just shared were true about both of them. Let me mention a few things that were different. Let's start with James. We really don't know a whole lot about James. We do know, according to Acts 12 in the first two verses, he was the first disciple that was martyred.

**18:01**

Listen to what it says. It says, Now about that time, Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to harm them. And he had James the brother of John put to death with the sword. Now, James must have been a threat with his passion and his zeal, being outspoken. I mean, just like John the Baptist, who had confronted the king because he had his brother's wife.

**18:26**

and it wasn't lawful for him to have his brother's wife, so what did the king do? He put John the Baptist into prison. What's the king do right here?

**18:37**

He kills him.

**18:42**

Obviously he was a threat to Herod. Peter wasn't a threat. Look at verse 3, now when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Verse 4, when he had seized him, he put him in prison. Peter must not have been that kind of a threat. Has he spared his life? That says a lot about James.

**19:08**

---

Now when we examine the New Testament, we don't find any letters written by James, the son of Zebedee. The epistle of James is not written by this James. The epistle of James is written by James, the Lord's half-brother, who was found in Acts chapter 15 at the council. The language matches in the writing.

**19:33**

He didn't write any letters. We have no record of any of his sermons, though we know he preached, because they were all commissioned to preach.

**19:47**

What about John? Now, that's different about John.

**19:52**

We know from John 21 that he was the only disciple that wasn't martyred. Over in John 21, beginning at verse 21, after the Lord Jesus had just told Peter how he was going to die, Peter says, Lord, what about this man? That sounds like Peter, doesn't it? Jesus said to him, if I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me.

**20:20**

Therefore this saying went out among the brothers that this disciple would not die, yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only if I want him to remain until I come. What is that to you?" That's what John said. That's John writing that.

**20:41**

John had to change also. And he did. Just as James did. Even though we don't get to see all the changes in James because of him being martyred, we do see the changes in John being the longest living apostle.

---

**20:58**

You know how he identified himself? He didn't identify himself by his name. He identified himself with this phrase, the disciple that Jesus loved. That's a beautiful phrase, isn't it? How do you refer to yourself? I'm the disciple that Jesus loves. I mean, just wrap your head around that for just a minute.

**21:26**

We are the disciples that Jesus loves. He loves us. And we experience that love every single day.

**21:38**

John was literally in awe that Jesus loved him.

**21:45**

He was amazed that Jesus loved the one who wanted to burn up all the Samaritans and wanted the place of honor in the kingdom that he even didn't deserve.

**21:55**

He was also the only disciple Jesus entrusted his mother to while he was on the cross. You remember that in John 19, 25?

**22:08**

It says, Therefore the soldiers did these things, but standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw that his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, Woman, behold your son. And then he said to the disciple, Behold your mother.

**22:35**

---

From that hour, the disciple took her into his home. Was it that love? Yes, love on the part of John, but love for Jesus. He is suffering on the cross, and he's concerned about his mother.

**22:55**

Tradition tells us that

**22:59**

He did take her to his home and she stayed there with him until she died.

**23:07**

Now, we know things about John, like I said. We know that he wrote the Gospel of John. He wrote 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John, and Revelation that we read from this morning.

**23:21**

We also know in Revelation 1-9 he was banished to the island of Patmos, and he tells us why. Because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. That's why he suffered.

**23:39**

Now even though that he wasn't martyred, that doesn't mean he didn't suffer.

**23:44**

mention more about that in just a moment. But before we talk about some of those things, what is it that we can learn from these two brothers? I mean last week when we were introduced to Peter we asked the same question, what can we learn from Peter? Well let's apply that to these two brothers. They mentioned three things. Number one, Jesus can change anyone, right? You're here this morning.

---

**24:13**

He had to change your heart toward Him, right? He had to change your heart toward the gospel.

**24:22**

There's no one beyond his reach. I mean, we look at people that we know that are some pretty bad people, and we think, you can't reach them.

**24:36**

Aren't you glad Jesus didn't give up on you?

**24:41**

Because in essence, we all were bad people. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Can't get any worse than that.

**24:54**

Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:15, it's a trustworthy statement and deserving full acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners among whom I am foremost. I am chief. I am first and it's not first as being the first sinner, no, Adam was the first sinner, but the word *protos* that he uses here, it has the idea of preeminence.

**25:22**

conveys the idea of being the foremost, the greatest of sinners. That's how Paul saw himself. And there are days when you see yourself like that, too. And there are days when you even question the Lord. How could you love me?

**25:43**

---

when I don't even obey you like I should? I don't witness when I should witness?

**25:51**

Sometimes I get angry at stupid things and I express myself that way. I mean, look at your life. Take a survey.

**26:06**

If the Lord was patient with the worst of sinners, no one is beyond the reach of His grace. It is by His love and His grace that we're not consumed. He has given us His love and His grace and His forgiveness and His mercy.

**26:26**

A.W. Tozier said, Jesus Christ knows the worst about you. Nonetheless, He is the one who loves you most.

**26:36**

So true.

**26:39**

Let that sink in.

**26:43**

So the first thing we can learn is Jesus can change anyone. The second thing we can learn is Jesus can also use anyone. I mean, if he can use Balaam's donkey, right, to rebuke a wayward prophet.

**27:02**



---

then he can use us. Now, don't you feel good now? I just put you on the level of a donkey. I didn't use that King James language. You know how it's translated there, right?

**27:16**

Don't think that you have to be a pastor or a deacon or a teacher of a class or a nursery worker in order to be used. I mean Jesus chose the sons of thunder and maybe you're not extroverted like them, maybe you're more introverted and He can use that too.

**27:42**

He has equipped His church with supernatural grace gifts so that we can minister to each other in the body. Everyone has a gift. We've talked about this so many times.

**27:57**

Everyone needs to use the gift that God has given you.

**28:06**

And so it's very important that you know what your gift is and that you use it. God didn't expect anyone to come to church to just sit and listen. He wants us to serve, to minister. Romans 12, 13 says, all of us are to contribute to the needs of the saints. Verse 15 says, all of us are to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

**28:32**

Verse 16 says, all of us are to be of the same mind toward one another. Verse 16 says, none of us are to be haughty in mind, but we are to associate with the lowly.

**28:47**

---

Again, A.W. Tozier says, humble yourself and cease to care what men think.

**28:56**

We tend to care more about what others think about us than we care about what God thinks. He's the one we should be concerned about.

**29:09**

Well, another lesson that I would mention.

**29:13**

And it has to do with self-control. I mean, if you're assertive, you're bold, you can't always keep your mouth shut because you're passionate, you know? Somebody said something, it just lights a fire under you. I understand that.

**29:32**

So they had to keep a check of their zeal.

**29:38**

You know, not all their zeal was right, as we've already seen, by them wanting to call down fire on the Samaritans.

**29:49**

Martin Lloyd-Jones says, it's obvious that you can have a wrong zeal. Zeal may be mistaken and may be even dangerous, but there is a time and a place for everything, right? I was thinking about that, time and a place for everything. What does your mind think of when you hear that phrase? Solomon. At least mine did anyway. Ecclesiastes chapter 3, listen to what Solomon says.

---

**30:16**

**Verse 1, there is an appointed time for everything. There is a time for every matter under heaven. A time to give birth and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted. A time to kill and a time to heal. A time to tear down and a time to build up. A time to weep and a time to laugh. A time to mourn and a time to dance.**

**30:45**

**A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones. A time to embrace and a time to shun embracing. A time to search and a time to lose. A time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear apart and a time to sew together. A time to be silent and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate.**

**31:13**

**A time for war and a time for peace.**

**31:21**

**Which disciple are you most like? Peter, the man with the foot-shaped mouth, but later became a rock?**

**31:33**

**Or are you like James and John, who were bold and confronted, but later became those who cared about others?**

**31:43**

**We didn't get to see all that the Lord was doing, as I said in James, because of His martyrdom, but we can see what the Lord did in John's life, who became zealous for the truth and zealous for love.**

---

**31:57**

But listen to this. Tradition tells us about James and his death. Tells us that the officer that guarded James on his way to being beheaded by the Roman sword was so impressed with James' courage and constant zeal that he fell down at the Apostles' feet and begged pardon for the part he had played in the rough treatment he had received. James lifted the man up, embraced and kissed him and said,

**32:27**

and the pardon of thy faults, immediately transformed, the officer publicly confessed his surrender to Christ and was beheaded alongside James.

**32:41**

That's pretty incredible if it's true. But that's what we hear from tradition. Now John, on the other hand, he was banished to the Isle of Patmos after a long life, died around 98 AD during the reign of Trajan. Those who knew him best said their remembrance of John was a phrase that he constantly used, and it was this, my little children, love one another.

**33:06**

What kind of people does God use? He uses ordinary people. With all the struggles, all the strengths, all the weaknesses of people like us. But keep this in mind, it's not what you are that's important. The issue is, is what are you willing to become?

**33:26**

What are you willing to become?

**33:32**

Well, all of that, of course, starts with the relationship to Jesus. And if you don't have one this morning, you can turn to Christ right now. Confess Him as Lord, believing in your heart that God raised Him from the dead. The Bible says you'll be saved, but

---

you've got to call upon Him. You've got to turn from your sin. You've got to embrace Him. You've got to believe. You say, well, Pastor Steve, I hear you all the time saying that's a supernatural work. It is.

**34:02**

It is supernatural work. But I'm just gonna echo what the writers of scripture said. They called people to repent. They called people to believe. They called people to receive Christ. And I'm gonna call you to do the same thing. And I'm gonna leave the results of that to Jesus.

**34:20**

Because He is the One who saves. Amen? Not me, just the messenger.

**34:30**

So if you don't know him today, come to him as we pray. Let's pray together. Heavenly Father, thank you so much for this opportunity for us to have this time in your word and to learn about James and John and last week to learn about Peter, to see what kind of men they were and what kind of men they became. Gives us hope.

**34:59**

we see our lives and sometimes it's hard to see past our sin and to see your hand at work in our lives but you are at work you've begun to work and you'll complete it in that day when we see you face to face but until then we're a work in progress

**35:20**

Thank you, Lord, for working in me. And thank you for not giving up on me or giving up on anybody else in this room.

**35:32**

---

**We have so much to be grateful for.**

**35:37**

**Just the very fact that you've forgiven us of all of our sin, and you haven't wiped us out the very moment when we sin.**

**35:50**

**that you forgive us.**

**35:54**

**And we know why. Because of what Jesus did. He took our sins in His own body on that tree.**

**36:06**

**So Lord, open up our hearts to you right now, I pray. Give us this zeal and passion that James and John had, that we would have it for the truth. We would have it for reaching people that don't know you, that are lost. Use us today, Father. And we pray all of this in your precious name.**