



The Feast of St. Bartholomew

August 24, 2014

Today at Trinity this is really “St. Bartholomew and All the Other Quiet Ones” Day! We want to take note of some of the New Testament saints who are named but not really talked about, especially among The Twelve.

It’s obvious from the Gospels that Jesus had many people following him, a crowd that grew and grew. They were called disciples, that is, learners. One day, from among the hundreds or thousands around him, Jesus chose twelve. The story is recorded in Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:13-16. What did he call The Twelve? What does this word mean?

Let’s look at and compare the lists of The Twelve in the four Gospels. Fill in the names for each of the Synoptic Gospels. Since John doesn’t have them all listed in one place, I’ll give you a list of those he does name in various places.

Mt. 10:1-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:13-16	John
			Andrew
			Simon Peter
			Philip
			Nathaniel
			Judas Iscariot
			Thomas the Twin
			The disciple Jesus loved
			The sons of Zebedee

Notice that most of the names are perfectly consistent from list to list, but three are not. Simon is called “the Canaanean” in two lists, but “the Zealot” in Luke. Canaanean describes his home region or ethnicity, while Zealot describes his politics. Thaddaeus in Matthew and Mark apparently was known to Luke as Judas the son of James. And John adds the name Nathaniel, which appears in none of the other Gospels. Is this one more occurrence of the same apostle being called by a different name? Most think so, that Nathaniel, which means “gift of God,” is his given name, and Bartholomew, or “son of Tolmai,” is his surname.

Additionally, Matthew is given another name, not in the lists of the Twelve, but in the story of his calling. What do Mark and Luke call Matthew in their versions of his calling?

Return to the list above and mark those who have some story recorded beyond just their names. (You can mark them on just one list, no matter which Gospel tells stories about them.) Who is just listed without any stories?

Returning to Nathaniel Bartholomew (NB), our “poster child” for those in the Bible who have only just a little recorded about them, his one story is recorded in John 1:43-51. Read this story.

- NB is paired with the same other disciple in every Gospel, the one who calls him. Name his partner.
- NB is from the town of _____, according to John 21:2, and maybe there was some civic rivalry between Bethsaida and Jesus hometown of _____. Judging by NB’s comment on Jesus’ home town, what character flaw might he have?
- How does NB’s buddy introduce Jesus to NB? What does this tell us about NB?
- Jesus greets NB with what sounds like quite high praise. Look at this conversation:
 - Jesus: “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile.”
 - NB: “How do you know me?”
 - Jesus: “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”
 - NB: “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel.”
 - Jesus: “Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.”
- Can you make sense of this conversation? First of all, is Jesus praising him, or being ironic?
- Next, does NB recognize irony, and answer ironically, or is he blushing responding to praise?
- What’s this about seeing NB under the fig tree? Why does this trigger such an outpouring of worship from NB? What do you suppose he was doing?
- Judging by what both of them say, there was something great about seeing NB under the fig tree. What could that be?

After this we hear no more about NB, which is one of the reasons we’re highlighting his saint’s day. So many people in the Bible are simply named, nothing more is known of them, or sometimes just enough to make us curious. Just like today, when most of us know we won’t be written down in any history books, God’s people consist of the leader/heroes and the faithful unnamed followers. So today we thank God for people like us!

Next Week

King David | David & Goliath

Read The Book of 1st Samuel!