

**Sunday 28 July 2024**

**Reflection Rev Simon McLeay – Iona College Chaplain**

It feels pretty good when you are chosen. When you put your hand up and someone says, “Simon” and there is a nice uplift in their voice. It feels pretty stink when you are not chosen. Even when it’s close, but you were the back up and missed out. Razor has been stamping his mark on the All Blacks by his selection. Many of our elite athletes have been chosen to go to Paris.

My friends, **God has chosen you.** As Presbyterians we have a long history of arguing about who is chosen and who is not. But I believe that God has chosen each of us and invites us, calls us, beckons us, to join his team. God has chosen us to be family, and God has chosen us for a purpose. **The only question is how you will respond.**

In our gospel reading, Jesus chose 12 people to be his special followers. Jesus identified a few people early on and asked them to join his team, but then, at a certain point, he chose the twelve. In Luke it says that he stayed up all night praying and then made his selection, Mark notes that Jesus went up a mountain to make the choice symbolic of being close to God. Jesus put a lot of effort into selecting these people, I bet he’d watched them, I bet he had informally interviewed them. But finally, he’s prayed, “Who should I select for this task?” And he chose them and appointed 12. Now there were many others along for the journey. We know there were a stack of women and men who also followed, but the 12 were selected to represent all the iwi of Israel. And they are a mixed mob.

Peter is a front and centre leader – but flawed. James and John are rumbunctious. Thomas has his doubts. There was Matthew the tax collector, Simon the activist, as well as Judas the betrayer. Many of these men represent opposite camps and yet Jesus chose them. Now that’s challenging... They were all men because that was culturally appropriate at the time, women were also highly involved – but in different ways.

Jesus chose these men for three things. Firstly, as a symbol. He chose 12 men to make a point, 12 is the number of tribes of Israel. He wanted to make the point that he was building something new, a movement for renewal within Israel and beyond.

Jesus chose students who he could explain his teaching to. When you are talking to a thousand you can’t go into great detail. You can’t answer questions, you can’t tease out the nuance in everything you say. And so, Jesus chose 12 students to learn from him.

Jesus chose teachers - on those 12 Jesus established his church, those 12 had to hear all they could in three short years and then pass it on! He chose 12 most of whom would be martyred, so being chosen had a downside. But those 12 needed to pass on what they had learnt to another generation. He chose multiple leaders, not just one. Yes, he

chose Peter to be the first. I am crystal clear that Jesus appointed Peter to a special role, but he didn't choose just Peter, he chose a team.

I believe God has chosen each of us, for this time and this place. To be part of his family and to be part of his mahi. What has he chosen you for? What skills has he given you? What message is he whispering to you. Maybe you are being called into a role that scares you, but God wants you to be there to represent him. We all have opportunities to take a small leadership role, to be the rep for our class, to be the manager for the team, to be a leader at school, to take on a local government role.

Take a moment and think, **what has God chosen me for.** Not if. But what.

One man was chosen but failed, in every team there is the possibility of failure, of deselection. Of something going wrong. Judas was chosen, was a good disciple and then failed. I take the generous view that Judas had his own agenda and was a 'virtue signalling, social justice warrior' who got impatient with Jesus. "Come on man, get on with it!" And that's why he betrayed. That's why he got tired of waiting and gave Jesus a little push. When he betrayed Jesus, he may have been thinking he was forcing Jesus to start a fight, but he was wrong.

Second question, what might derail you from doing what God has for you? There are the obvious, do you drink too much, have you got a temper, have you been fiddling your expenses, watching something you shouldn't be? But what else might derail you. **Chosen one, Judas was chosen, but derailed.**

There was another man who was chosen, but didn't follow. In Mark 10 we read about a rich young ruler who came to Jesus and asked some good question and then said, "What more can I do?" Jesus said this to him. "Sell all you have, give it to the poor and come and follow me." Most people read this as a tangential story. I don't. I think that Jesus knew that Judas was going to betray him. Jesus didn't make him do it. But Jesus knew. And Jesus was selecting someone to fill his place. Jesus invited this man to join his team on the bench – and he said no – it's too costly. Can you imagine being offered the chance to be one of the twelve apostles and saying, "No that's too costly."

What is holding you back? Is it wealth? Is it security? Is it mana? Do you know what God is calling you to do, but it's just too costly? I remember when I trained as a teacher, I had to leave a secure job and start again. **What is holding you back?**

I want to finish with those who are not chosen but do anyway. I have seen many students who missed out on leadership positions at school. Those not chosen for the role they applied for. It happens in life; and some get angry and disconnect, but others lead anyway. They contribute and build. **If you miss out, how will you respond?**

Sometimes God calls us, but it doesn't come with any public recognition. Are you being called to an unrecognised role. To a role where you just do the mahi, but the mana is missing? I'll let you in on a secret, God sees. If you do the mahi, he accords the mana. And mana in his sight is everything. "Well done my good and faithful servant", is better than any gong. Jesus called the 12; he is calling you, how will you respond?