

The Pharisees didn't have enough integrity to take their problem with Jesus to Jesus. They went griping to his disciples. Maybe they thought they had a better chance of intimidating them than intimidating the Master.

They were right. Peter had no idea how to answer them back, so he shrugged and said he had to go to the bathroom. He was relieved, in more ways than one, when he saw they'd left. Because, the truth was, he 90% agreed with them.

"Master, can I have a word?"

"Sure, Peter, and I know exactly what you're going to bring up. You wonder why in the world, if I'm trying to get a spiritual movement going, I'd pick for leadership people with moral flaws and ugly pasts. Shouldn't my leadership choices be people of extraordinary talent, impeccable credentials, and a past that shows they can be trusted?"

Peter tried to look unsurprised. "That's right, Jesus. Almost anyone is more qualified for spiritual leadership than a cagey money grubber who takes moral short-cuts to grease his palms. Is that the example to give perspective converts. My advice is first to invite people like him to repentance, get their spiritual lives in order ... and then maybe, later, invite them to apostleship."

Jesus sighed and smiled. "Peter, your advice is wise, but it's wise in the way the world is wise. The world, the company, even the Church eventually, tries to find the best possible people for the big jobs. God's way, sometimes, is to pick unqualified people for big jobs and hope the job makes them the best possible people.

"I know Matthew is far from perfect. I see character flaws and skeletons in his closet that have escaped even your sharp eyes. But I'm choosing him.

When God wants people picked for something, it's important they have at least some natural talent for it. But it's even more important they have some significant lack of talent. That will make the person turn to God, and turn to the people around him. God picks people for jobs and roles in the world for their own salvation, not just for what they accomplish."

Peter's face registered such astonishment it was obvious he didn't get it at all.

So Jesus continued. "None of you are up to the jobs the Father will give you. That doesn't bother the Father, it doesn't bother me, and it shouldn't bother you. Your successes will give you hope, your failures --- moral and otherwise --- will make you humbly seek out God and one another.

God's kingdom is not about giving rewards, recognition and the good jobs to the talented and deserving, even to the morally talented and deserving. God's kingdom is about showing mercy. It's the nature of mercy that ... it's not deserved. I showed Mathew mercy right now. I hope you show him mercy, and that all my followers become merciful. God loves mercy more than sacrifice.