

Sermon 11-12-17 Callings I Corinthians 15:58

Dear Called by the Lord:

When a friend or loved one is injured or seriously ill, we turn to prayer, offering up prayers for health and healing.

- Yet we may not really expect angels to descend or rays of heavenly light to surround the person we are praying for.
- Instead, while we are praying we also dial 911
- We depend on paramedics, doctors and nurses to help and save our loved one

We know that God hears our prayers and that he is working through the first responders and medical personnel. We know that God can intervene in astonishing and unexpected ways and he may according to his will, do exactly that.

When he does, we offer songs and prayers of praise for his mercy.

- But even through the eyes and hands of those medical personnel God is present and working in miraculous ways.
- He is, as it were, “hiding” behind such people, working through their skills to help and heal.

We say that these rescue and medical workers have a “calling” in life.

- This is their vocation in life, to help and heal and save
- It is what they feel called to do
- They are not alone in having a calling, a vocation.

You have a calling, a vocation, too.

- You have many of them and those calling may change over time

- You may have the calling of a career or of a job
- Such work is a vocation, a calling

But you have other callings, too. These other callings or vocations involve every relationship that you have.

- You may be a father, mother, spouse, parent
- You may be a son, daughter, grandparent, aunt, uncle
- You may be a cousin, nephew, niece
- The list goes on

You wear many hats. But you have one “hat” that is the foundation of all the others. You wear a crown, visible only to eyes of faith, as a son or daughter of the King of Kings.

- This crown of glory and life is yours as a baptized child of God
- You have been called into the kingdom of his Son
- You have been summoned into a life of love and service to others
- You are called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus
- You are called to love God with all your heart, soul and mind
- You are called to love your neighbor as yourself

This is your chief calling, your most important vocation.

- Vocation comes from the Latin word *vocare* which means to call
- Within that chief calling as a baptized child of God, you live out your many other vocations

Your vocations in some cases will remain the same; others may change.

- You may be a husband or wife and later become a father or mother as well

- You may be a child of your parents, and in time become a brother or sister, too.
- You may be a teacher and at the same time attend school as a student

In all of these constant and changing roles, you live as a son or daughter of the King and share his love in the world. In every place and relationship where your life as a citizen of heaven touches or intersects your life as a citizen in this world ---at each of those places---whenever and wherever those dual citizenship intersect, that is where you find your calling.

Table of Duties

In the Small Catechism Luther put a section called the Table of Duties. Luther provided passages from the Bible that pertain to the vocations or callings of different group of people. One set of passages was directed to church leaders and pastors, another set of passages addressed a believer's obedient response to government. There are passages directed to husbands, wives, parents, children, employees, supervisors, youth, widows and people in general.

I Corinthians 15:58 "Therefore...stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

Martin Luther whose work we have celebrated this past month had many vocations, too.

- He was a son of Hans and Margaret Luther and a baptized child of God
- He was an obedient son, who first set out to study law

- Later, fearing for his eternal salvation, he determined that a different calling was needed and he became an Augustinian monk.
- Believing himself called to be a monk, he hoped by his work and study and prayer to find a merciful God who would forgive his sins.

While living in the monastery, Martin was sent to the study the Bible so that he would be able to lecture at the university.

- In time he became a doctor of biblical studies – a calling of life-long importance for him as a teacher of the church and a professor at the university
- Later Luther would marry and take on the callings of husband to Katie and father to their children.
- One of his most important callings was that of pastor, as he proclaimed in simple, caring language the good news of God's free forgiveness in Jesus Christ, bringing comfort and hope to the people he served.

Martin Luther's callings would carry him into areas of love and service and into conflict and suffering, the same places that our callings may carry us.

Our callings are the places where our heavenly citizenship and our earthly citizenship intersect. As at any good intersection --- if viewed from above --- a cross is formed. That intersection of heaven and earth, that cross of suffering, marks the vocation of our Lord Jesus, who was sent to take onto himself the burden of our sins.

- Jesus took onto himself the sin and guilt of our every failed calling.
- Jesus took onto himself our failure to love and serve our neighbor as ourselves

- Jesus took onto himself our failure to love God with all of our heart and soul and mind
- He took into his own body the sins we commit in our callings as husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter and all the rest.
- He carried that sin and guilt to the cross and there suffered in our place the penalty of death that we earned for ourselves.

That was our Lord's calling, his vocation.

- He rose from the dead, never to die again
- This too is our calling, our present and future calling
- Through Baptism we share in his death and resurrection
- We are raised up now, today, to walk in newness of life
- One day we will be raised up from our graves to live in his presence forever

For now, our calling as baptized children of God may follow the path of the cross.

- The cross-shaped intersection of our dual citizenship may bring suffering into our lives too, as we live as God's holy people on this earth
- In our various vocations we may at times be called to take up the burdens of others, of our family members, friends or co-workers.
- Our calling as sons and daughters of the King of kings may mean that we must endure the suffering of persecution.
- At such times we pray that we will have the strength to remain steadfast in our faith and in our calling as baptized children of God.

In every vocation we have and will have a call to love God and to love our neighbor as ourselves. What does it mean to love our neighbor as ourselves?

- What we desire for ourselves, our own life – health, employment, peace and safety, eternal salvation we desire for our neighbor.
- We desire for our neighbor be that friend, family or stranger, what we desire for ourselves.

That is our calling, our vocation. We are called to glorify God who is at work in us, behind us, through us, caring for others and carrying out his astonishing works of love and service.

The Apostle Paul praises God who has called us to himself in Christ and sends us **out into the world in his service**: “**Now to him who is able to do far more** abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” Ephesians 3:20-21