

Dear members and friends of St. John,

We read from John's Gospel:

Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off. (John 21:2-8, ESV)

When I was a young Christian, I was often confused. I liked the Bible, but it seemed to create in me more questions than answers. (Of course, this was God's plan: to make me intrigued – to give me a desire to "fill in" the seemingly endless blanks). One of the biggest "blanks" for me was on **just what was expected of me as a Christian**. In my early thirties, I was successful, by most standards. I had a wife and two children, a respectable job and a nice house. My friends told me I had it made – I was living the American dream. But was I?

I would attend church and Bible study each week. My well-meaning pastor told me that the "only work that matters to the Lord, is the work that grows His kingdom." I read passages from the Bible, like the one above, and I would wonder: "**Am I doing the work that pleases my Lord?**" You see, the disciples had spent three years being trained up by God. They were equipped to serve Him. After Jesus' resurrection, it appears that the disciples were at a loss as to how to proceed. They returned to what they knew: commercial fishing. And they were met by only frustration. God had made them fishers of men, and they were trying to catch the aquatic kind. That got me wondering: **maybe being a fisher of men is all that God wants of any of us?**

It wasn't until seminary (many years later) that I was introduced to the **doctrine of vocation**. Apparently, Martin Luther struggled with the same thoughts that I had had: that only "mission minded" work was pleasing to God. Martin, having completed his training to be a lawyer, was caught in an electrical storm. Believing that God was about to bring poor Martin's life to an end, he promised God that he would enter the monastery, if God would let him live. Of course Martin lives, and becomes a monk. He devotes himself to the **ascetic lifestyle**: denying oneself of worldly pleasures to draw closer to God. Surely God would bless Martin with such complete and faithful devotion to prayer and worship? Years later, Martin would have an epiphany: God wants us to use our gifts and talents to do the work that makes us good citizens of mankind. God places us in our vocations, and **we please Him** when we do an honest day's work, in an honest profession or trade. The milkmaid, who milks the cows, and takes the milk to the village to supply their needs, was more valuable to God than 100 monks praying 20 hours a day.

Whatever vocation you're involved in: skilled trade, professional, stay-at-home mom, grandparent, student, community volunteer, church lay leader – know this: **God is pleased with you! He's**

equipped you for your vocations! He loves to see you carry them out with honesty and integrity.

Of course, life is also a balancing act: I had the vocations of husband, father, engineer, church volunteer, baseball, soccer, and basketball coach – whew! Keeping all the “balls in the air” at the same time was a challenge. At the time, it would have been a big help to know that God was pleased with my efforts. **Because of faith in Jesus Christ**, God would look at my less than perfect job as husband, father, engineer, etc., and be pleased in the much less than perfect outcomes. He blessed my wife and I, and my children. And even though life was difficult at times, and I despaired over my inability to keep God’s commandments, God was always there to remind me that my sins were covered by His Son’s blood, shed for me.

The lesson from our text: **God will bless your work, when you are doing what pleases Him.** The disciples of Christ were called by Him for a very special mission: to go out and create His church on earth. The 153 fish that they hauled in: some would suggest that this was one fish for each of the 153 nations of the world that were in existence at that time. God would spread His word to the entire world. They would be His instruments.

Not everyone is called into church work. Not everyone can be a missionary. Not everyone is gifted to do the work or trade that you do. God’s plan is to weave together the tapestry of life, using each of us as His threads. Knitted together by our Creator, we have purpose and meaning. We share our faith with those who are without. We share our talents and money to help those in need. And the tapestry of life is beautiful to our Lord. You are part of that tapestry. **You matter to God.**

On March 9th, Social Ministries is sponsoring a special brunch in recognition of our recently retired lay leaders. We will give thanks to our God for their years of service and dedication. God equipped them and used them for His purpose. Is God preparing you for work in the church? Does He have a new vocation for you in the community? Pray that God will use you in whatever vocation He places you in, that you may bring honor and glory to His holy name. And know this: **through faith in His Son, God is pleased with you!**

Pastor Travis