

## To Be Called

Pondering Questions: Part 6 “To Be Called”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – September 25, 2022

16<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost

**Readings:** 1 Samuel 3:1-10; Matthew 4:17-22; Romans 1:1-7

**Reflection:** Psalm 99

**Greeting:** The Lord gives wisdom, from him comes understanding. The Lord stores up sound wisdom for the upright. He guards the path of justice and preserves the faithful. Let your wisdom enter our hearts and minds, O Lord! (*Proverbs 2*)

**Prayer:** O God, keeper of wisdom and understanding, you have brought us together into your presence this day. Grant us grace to worship you as we seek your blessing and your knowledge. Help us to grow in heart and mind with you, Lord. Build us up in your spirit so that we may know your love and be strengthened by your righteousness. Help us to be bold in our faith so that we may do your will joyfully and eagerly. May we worship you in a spirit of truth, that we may follow you all the days of our lives, through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 99

*The Lord is king; let the peoples tremble! He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake! The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples. Let them praise your great and awesome name. Holy is he! Mighty King, lover of justice, you have established equity; you have executed justice and righteousness in Jacob. Extol the Lord our God; worship at his footstool. Holy is he! Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel also was among those who called on his name. They cried to the Lord, and he answered them. He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; they kept his decrees and the statutes that he gave them. O Lord our God, you answered them; you were a forgiving God to them but an avenger of their wrongdoings. Extol the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain, for the Lord our God is holy. (Psalm 99 NRSV\*)*

We read the words of Psalm 99 and hear of God’s justice and righteousness. That the Lord calls us as we call upon the Lord. That we find comfort and forgiveness in God’s love. How have you experienced the call to follow God? How have you extended that call to others? How do you celebrate the redemption we find in Christ? How do you invite others into a life of love? How can we share together in God’s grace and mercy?

**Prayer:** O God, you are our hope and our praise. Help us to seek your wisdom in all that we are and do. May we be strengthened by your steadfast love and faithfulness as we come before you in prayer this day. Help us Lord, that you lift us up in both our joys and our sorrows. Be with us in both our laughter and our tears. May your light guide us and lead us to life everlasting, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

**Sermon:**

Our scripture readings for today comes from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading for today comes from 1 Samuel chapter 3 verses 1 through 10.

*Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the Lord under Eli. The word of the Lord was rare in those days; visions were not widespread. At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim so that he could not see, was lying down in his room; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The Lord called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.' " So Samuel went and lay down in his place. Now the Lord came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening." (1 Samuel 3:1-10 NRSV\*)*

Our next reading for today comes from the Gospel of Matthew chapter 4 verses 17 through 22.

*From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. (Matthew 4:17-22 NRSV\*)*

Our final reading for today comes from Romans chapter 1 verses 1 through 7.

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord,*

*through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ, To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:1-7 NRSV\*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

In today's message, we look at what the Bible says about being called. For this I put together a few different examples from Scripture about being called. Part of what we discover is that there is not always a specific pattern to how people are called. What we see is a variety of ways people are called. When this particular question came across my desk, I decided to look at a few different examples to show this variation. The first one that we get here is Samuel. Samuel goes to be trained early on in life and it's when he is a boy training under Eli that he is called. And we hear that Samuel heard a voice while in bed and he thinks it's Eli. So, he keeps going to Eli thinking that it is him calling to him. Eventually, Eli figures out that God is calling Samuel. So, Eli instructs him on what to do. In this instance, we get the more dramatic of the callings. And we see this in other ways that people are called. But it's one of the examples we have of being directly spoken to. This is one of the most direct ways that someone can be called, directly hearing the voice of God in your ear. However, it isn't the only way that people are called.

Matthew gives us another example of being called. One might at first align this with Samuel's calling, because they are directly called by Christ. But when Peter and Andrew are fishing, they don't know who Jesus is. He doesn't walk up to them and say, "I am the Son of God, follow me." Instead, the call is "follow me and I will make you fishers of people." Their call is to a way of life. That they are going to share in Christ's message, and they are going to reach out to people and change lives. The same thing happens with James and John. And for them the calling to do God's work is simply somebody else reaching out to them. Now, of course, that falls under a very different category for some people because that's a direct calling from Jesus. And one might say that it would be more compelling than just somebody calling to you off the street. But at the core, it's still a calling from another person.

We can put our last reading into this mix as we fully contemplate all of this, and we turn to Paul. Now, Paul isn't calling anyone here. I include this because of the way Paul references everyone because this is Paul's introduction to his letter to the Romans. And Paul starts off by asserting that he has called to be an apostle, certifying his own calling. Paul then goes on to say that he's writing this letter to those called to belong to Jesus Christ. To all God's beloved in Rome who are called to be saints. Meaning that not only has Paul stated his calling as an apostle, but that each person in the church in Rome has been called, which opens up a bigger door for all of this. What we quickly see is that there are different types of callings, and they happen to people in different ways. And they come to people through different methods and feelings. People have different stories of their call, often unique to their lives. Because of that, I

don't know that I could put together a uniform list because I think each person is called in a way that speaks to them personally.

I think I can explain this easier by giving an example. When I was in high school my lab partner and I flubbed an experiment in chemistry. We were supposed to be dissolving magnesium, I believe into hydrochloric acid. I think we got something on the magnesium because when we put it in at first it didn't react. We put a little more into the beaker and it didn't react. Then we failed to communicate what we were about to do. I leaned in closer to get a better look to see if maybe it was starting to react, and we missed it. My lab partner thought maybe we should just add more and see if we get a reaction. What happened is that I leaned in just as he added more, and toxic fumes shot into my nose, and I lost most of my sense of smell that day. I have been known to be able to walk into places that sell scented candles as well and not be able to smell anything outside of a few scents that were left to me. It's healed some over the years but there are still a lot of scents that are too faint for me to ever catch. If it ever seems like I didn't smell something, it's most likely because I can't.

Now you might be wondering where this is going. But it's important to know that my sense of smell has been damaged since I was a teenager. The reason this comes into play is that when I think about my own calling, it comes in two forms. My initial call to ministry was not anything that I would consider out of the ordinary. In fact, it was about as plain as you can get. One day my pastor looked at me and said "Have you ever thought about going into the ministry? Because I think you have a real gift." I told them I'd think about it. I wasn't sure. I didn't know if that was right for me. And so, I prayed on it and I thought about it. And there came a Sunday where we had all the flowers out for Easter. None of which I could smell. But they were pretty, and they were all along the front rail. I remember going up and I remember praying. I was looking for an answer, trying to discern whether or not this was the right thing for me. And as I sat there praying something came to me that hadn't happened to me for so long that it took me a little while to recognize it. But as I was praying, looking for guidance, I could smell those flowers. That may not seem very big to you, but it had been a long time since I had smelled flowers. And I could smell them, and they were rich and wonderful and suddenly I knew this was the answer I'd been looking for. Something rich and wonderful had been placed before me so I answered that call. Very soon after that, I was appointed to my first charge. And that's what brought me here to you today.

Now I can't tell you that everyone's going to experience being called in the same way. Smelling flowers isn't going to mean anything to you if you can smell them every day of your life. What I can tell you is that I think it's something unique for each person that speaks to them that will reach them. And that I think each one of us has been called and we're all called in different ways and we're all called to different things. And sometimes we're called more than once. I know that it was one thing for me to be called to follow Christ, it was another for me to be called to preach as part of my ministry. Each one of us is called to minister in our own way. Not all of us are called to be a leader within the church, to preach every Sunday, but some of

us are called to lead in our own ministries. Ministries of outreach, ministries of care, ministries of giving. Each of us reaching out to those in need, each of us with our own purpose, each with our own calling.

I guess my biggest point here is that I don't think there is a list of specific signs. I'm not sure we have a test we can use for if someone has been called. If we are wanting to see if someone is living out their calling to serve God, that is something we can do. Do they genuinely love God? Do they love their neighbor as themselves? Do they give good news to the oppressed? Do they welcome the stranger? Do they feed the hungry? Do they clothe the naked? Do they help those in need? Do they share Christ's love with others? So, we can discern when someone is living out their calling, but I'm not sure we can make a list of how to recognize a calling. I just know that God reaches us in a way that speaks to us personally. So, know that in all likelihood we are all called in different ways. Sometimes called through means that are beyond ordinary. Sometimes called simply from someone else inviting us to take part. Sometimes just a feeling. Sometimes more that we cannot describe. But whatever way we are called, let us be called to serve. And let us do all the good that we can wherever we can in Christ's name, so that we may love and be loved. And that we may do the will of the Father, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, ever following the Son. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

## **Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## Our Current Series – *Pondering Questions*

Our series will have Pastor Cameron answering your questions! Get them to him however is most convenient for you and he will be using those as the basis for our weekly message!

### Prayer List

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