

Sermon Outline - Sun, September 18, 2022 – Calling – To Whom Are You Called?
Ecclesiastes 4:1-12; Isaiah 58:6-12;

Keyword Summary –

Overview – It's Calling Month. Our equation is - CALLING = God's Plan + Your Gifts & Experiences + Community/ies of Engagement. This year we are looking at how calling is so deeply tied to community. Week 1 we started with the idea that we are relational beings; that anything worth doing requires working w/ others; and that knowing who you are called to, may clarify what you are called to do. Last week we looked at the way that Money, Envy, and Trying to do It Alone stand in the way of calling and the ways that Generosity, Seeing the Beauty in Every Person (incl. yourself) and Embracing Vulnerability can support calling. Today - embracing calling in tough communities.

Exegesis

- Every one of us finds ourselves in community with folks when we didn't choose –blood family, neighborhood, work, or an identity group we feel not quite accepted in.
- The Bible is full of stories of folks who in choosing to follow God, end up being at odds with the communities that they were a part of. Sometimes folks got a pass to fully leave that community and go somewhere else (Abraham); Sometimes folks were sent back to communities where they didn't fit in and had to make it work (Moses); Many have a middle way of some interaction with the community and the creation of other spaces of belonging.
- I wish it were not true, but sometimes God calls us to and does the best work in us in relationship with communities we would not always choose if we had another option
- How do you find calling in a community in which you are in conflict?
- Caveat – sometimes you need a break and God will give you time away. Sometimes you need boundaries and Spirit will help you leave a toxic situation. However, you will not get through life without being in difficult communities.

Shifting relationships with an entire community will take time, but that is the work to which God calls us. For now, we are leaning in to one-on-one shifting as a way of facilitating the larger shift.

Key Points – **How Can We Find Calling with Communities We Don't Exactly Want to Be In**

1. **Generosity – Giving From a Spirit of Grace As A Service Back to God** - How can we learn to give, not transactionally, but extending grace to others as God has to us.
2. **Seeing the Beauty – How Can You See the Image of God When It Does Not Readily Appear** – We are all beautiful and broken. Society ignores the beauty of some and the brokenness of others. We see the injustice in that, but how do we disrupt those patterns in our lives?
3. **Embracing Vulnerability – Leading with Love to Bring About Healing** - If we want new ways of being, we often should live those ways so that other people can experience them.

These values and practices can be best learned and practiced in tough situations. Difficult communities can be a real opportunity for your own growth and if you really lean into it, you could help to support transformation far beyond yourself.

Questions –

1. Can you think of a time in your life when you were called to meet the need of someone you didn't like, and it created new insight or possibility? Is there someone in your life whose need you have been ignoring because you don't like them? Can you trust God and respond to their need regardless of how they react?

2. Is there someone who you have trouble seeing as a child of God? How can you connect with to that person in a way that allows you to see them more fully? How can you allow you focus on their strengths and gifts to allow you to see them as a child of God?
3. For a person you might have trouble seeing as a child of God or who you have had a challenge connecting with— How can you open yourself up first to show how God wants it to be and then create opportunity for collaboration or at least mutual understanding?