

Living in Union with Christ

Session #5 - Your Calling in Christ and Christ in Your Calling

**All Saints Church
2024-03-24**

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introductory question

How conscious are you of having a calling from the Lord? - Is it something you've thought about and have specific ideas and convictions about, or is it something about which you have more questions than answers?

you are here

Sessions

- 1) Living in the Presence of God - Psalm 139, Psalm 1, proactivity, "bring it on"
- 2) Taste and See - The Affections and Loving God - Edwards, Piper, Smith
- 3) Union With the Present, Loving Lord Jesus Christ - John 14
- 4) Your Sanctification Story in Christ - Ferguson, Macaskill, Johnson, Powlison
- 5) Your Calling in Christ and Christ in Your Calling**
- 6) United with Christ in His Suffering and in Our Suffering
- 7) United with Each Other Through Christ

introduction

The word, "call," is used in the Bible in several ways - the ordinary senses of summoning someone or naming something, as well as some special senses, such as God's calling a person to Christ. Today, we'll focus on one use - God's putting each of us in a particular "life situation".

Theologians use the word, "vocation," which comes from the Latin word for "call." In secular usage, vocation refers to a person's job or profession and is seen as self-discovery and self-expression. In the biblical idea, our calling does not come from within us; it originates in God - He is the one who calls. The word reminds us of God's initiative and sovereign control over the events of the world, which encompasses our whole life situation.

Martin Luther

Martin Luther developed a Protestant doctrine of vocation.

- disagreed with the medieval church's idea that God's calling applied only to the priesthood.
- 1 Peter 2:9 - ... you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession ...
- saw all believers as having a priestly function and a calling from God.
- "God Himself milks the cows through the vocation of the milkmaid."
- "Give us this day our daily bread" - God answers through the ordinary work of many vocations - farmers, millers, bakers, truck drivers, grocery store workers. He called them "masks of God"

doctrine of vocation - God's sovereignty

Our life situation is chosen by God and is a calling from God.

- For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. [Eph 2:10]
- Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. ... Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) [1Cor 7:17-21]
- Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. [Rom 13:1-2]

doctrine of vocation - God's sovereignty

Even suffering and injustice in our life situation are callings from God.

- Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust. For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. [1Pet 2:18-23]

doctrine of vocation - background in creation

- So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." [Gen 1:27-28]
- (fall and curse - pain in childbearing, tension between spouses, thorns, thistles, and sweat) [Gen 3]
- Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work ... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth ... and rested on the seventh day [Ex 20:8-11]

doctrine of vocation - gifts and specialization

- For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, ... [Ro 12:4-8, see also 1Cor 12, Eph 4, and 1Peter 4]
- "... I have called by name Bezalel ... and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with ability and intelligence, with knowledge and all craftsmanship, to devise artistic designs, to work in gold, silver, and bronze, in cutting stones for setting, and in carving wood, to work in every craft. And behold, I have appointed with him Oholiab ... And I have given to all able men ability, that they may make all that I have commanded you: the tent of meeting, and the ark of the testimony, and the mercy seat that is on it, and all the furnishings of the tent ...
[Ex 31:1-11]

doctrine of vocation - gender

- Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ... [Eph 5:22-25]
- An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels ... [Prov 31]
- Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. [1Tim 2:11-12]
- Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife ... [1Tim 3:2]
- Let deacons each be the husband of one wife ... [1Tim 3:12]

doctrine of vocation - wisdom

- The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.
[Prov 16:9]
- A man's steps are from the Lord; how then can man understand his way?
[Prov 20:24]
- Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety. [Prov 11:14]
- A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.
[Prov 10:4]
- It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep. [Ps 127:1-2]

doctrine of vocation - wisdom

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:
a time to be born, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;
a time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to break down, and a time to build up;
a time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance;
a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together;
a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;
a time to seek, and a time to lose;
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;
a time to tear, and a time to sew;
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;
a time to love, and a time to hate;
a time for war, and a time for peace. [Ecc 3:1-8]

the presence of Christ in your calling

Christ works in our work.

- ... the mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints ... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me. [Col 1:26-29]
- In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God. For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience - by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God ... [Rom 15:17-19]

the presence of Christ in your calling

Christ works sovereignly through authorities over us.

- Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, **as you would Christ**, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but **as bondservants of Christ**, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will **as to the Lord** and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him. [Eph 6:5-9]
- Wives, submit to your own husbands, **as to the Lord**. ... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ... [Eph 5:22-25]

the presence of Christ in your calling

Christ in brothers and sisters around us

- ...'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ... 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' [Matt 25:34-40]

our stories

My Story

- conversation on a train
- Chariots of Fire
- "for the same reason that dogs bark"

Your Stories

- How do the Bible texts we've considered today affect your thinking about your life situation?
- How conscious are you of having a calling from the Lord?
- How conscious are you of the presence of Christ in the people around you?

for further study

- Gene Veith, *God at Work* - Veith has written extensively on the doctrine of vocation, in this book, as well as in many articles, which you can find with a simple web search.