

Unison Prayer of Confession
Creator God, you have created us, but we have chosen to go our own way. You have reclaimed us, but we have, by our arrogant attitudes and actions, rejected the claim. You have sent your Holy Spirit to break into our controlled and unimaginative routines, and we have not appreciated that burst of creative energy. We are ready now, ready to admit that our ways are full of dangerous byways. Our mistakes and failures have often come because, in our false pride, we have not listened to you. Save us again by your forgiving love. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Gloria Patri
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be; world without end. Amen.

Children’s Message

Baptism *Colt Phillips Gogan & Scout Phillips Gogan*

Presentation of Offering

Doxology
Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise Him, all creatures here below; praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts; praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication

Hymn “God is Here” #461

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 42:1-9

Gospel Reading: Matthew 3:13-17

Message “Vocation ”

Prayers of the People and the Lord’s Prayer

Ordination and Installation of New Elders and Deacons

Closing Hymn “Here I am Lord” #525

Benediction

Postlude

Scriptures

Isaiah 42:1-9, NIV

The Servant of the LORD

¹ “Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations.
² He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.
³ A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;
⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.
In his teaching the islands will put their hope.”
⁵ This is what God the LORD says—
the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out,
who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it,
who gives breath to its people,
and life to those who walk on it:
⁶ “I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness;
I will take hold of your hand.
I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people
and a light for the Gentiles,
⁷ to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.
⁸ “I am the LORD; that is my name!
I will not yield my glory to another
or my praise to idols.
⁹ See, the former things have taken place,
and new things I declare;
before they spring into being
I announce them to you.”

Matthew 3:13-17, NIV

The Baptism of Jesus

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. ¹⁴ But John tried to deter him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?”
¹⁵ Jesus replied, “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” Then John consented.
¹⁶ As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”



Ushers: Peggy Farman & Cathy Aardema
Music Director: Wendy Corr
Music Accompanist & Choir Director: Tim Schoessler
Message: Pat Montgomery

The Nursery is available for individual use during the Service! While the Nursery is not staffed, parents can view the Service in the Nursery live via streaming.

Vocation and the Christian Life

Linda Peacore, October 6, 2010

How does the concept of vocation relate to the Christian life?

Introduction

Christians often speak of having a "vocation" or being "called." They talk about receiving a call to a particular work or situation. However, there are a multitude of meanings behind the concept and arguably, most people are not clear about its significance. What do we mean by vocation and how does it relate to the Christian life?

Historical Background

The traditional Christian language of vocation has often been related to one's work, viewing work in terms of a calling or vocation. In Latin the word vocation literally means "call" and the idea that one could be called to many different sorts of work was one of the radical proposals of the Protestant Reformation. Prior to that, medieval Monasticism was the context in which vocation was meaningful. From that perspective, vocation was a special calling to the monastic life and was considered a superior way. One was called to be a priest or nun or monk.

Martin Luther opposed this view of a "special calling" or "vocation" to the monastic life. He believed the call of God comes to each in their daily tasks. Luther wanted to overcome a reduction of vocation to a calling to a particular kind of religious life, arguing that all Christians have a vocation and that every type of work performed by Christians can be understood as such. This basic insight was rooted in his doctrine of justification by faith. In this sense, there is a double vocation: spiritual and external. For the Puritans, this distinction was made in terms of "particular call" and "general call"--we're all called in conversion to Christ, but we

have a particular call unique to our situation and giftedness. Through the proclamation of the gospel, every person hears God's spiritual call and this reaches them in their specific station or profession, transforming these into a vocation. For Luther, to be a husband, wife, child, or servant means to be called by God to a particular kind of activity. It means to have a vocation. In this sense, Luther (and Calvin following him) stressed the this-worldliness of vocation; it had a direct connection to one's daily life in the world.

From a biblical perspective, we see various emphases on the notion of call: there is an effectual call in which we become a disciple of Christ; we experience a providential call when we see God's hand in our lives; we have a charismatic call whereby the Spirit equips us for a task; and we receive a call in terms of our desire for a task which the Spirit creates in us. Old Testament language of call is used primarily for the people of God who are summoned to participate in God's intentions for the world. It is a call to holiness and service and relates to God's salvation purpose. The New Testament portrays call as an invitation to salvation through discipleship, a summons to holy corporate and personal living as well as a call to service. All are called, together and for the whole of everyday life. From a biblical point of view, we recognize the layers of meaning to the notion of call, which involve God's invitation to discipleship and the Spirit's empowerment for particular work in the service of God's kingdom.

Theological Implications For Christian Life

Therefore, we could say that vocation is a movement of living *in* the glory of God and *for* the glory of God. Rather than viewing it as stagnant and determinative, vocation or calling is best understood as a dynamic process. At the time of the Reformation Luther's teaching on "calling" was liberating, giving

stature to the laity and providing new motivation, guidance, and significance to daily occupations. Ironically, the issues of Luther's day may apply to contemporary society as well. His teaching on vocation--that daily activities constitute the sphere of one's Christian vocation--does not seem to be grasped by contemporary Christians who struggle to see the relationship between their work, other daily activities, and their faith.

It may be useful to frame the question in terms of two basic principles: (1) our ultimate calling is to glorify God; (2) we serve God in our callings out of gratitude for grace already received. God has graciously invited all people to participate in the work of redirecting our fallen world to its original purpose. Our legitimate activities, not only religious work, or one's paid work, constitute one's vocation in the sight of God. So often we live by certain polarities: secular and sacred, manual labor and the contemplative life, this world and other-worldliness. In thinking of vocation or calling more holistically, we can be liberated from the formula that God has a plan for our lives--in the sense that God has a well-laid-out plan that one is obliged to discover and pursue. To use a phrase from Karl Barth, we have the "freedom of obedience"--to use the gifts, the opportunities, and circumstances that are the givens of our lives in particular acts of obedience within the varied contexts of life.

God reaches people wherever they are and calls them to discipleship. In agreement with Luther, there is not an ethical value differentiation between the various callings. One can serve God in any of them. What matters is not the kind of work we do, but that we do our work as faithful disciples. God calls and we respond by serving God where God has placed us, be it as a student or teacher, a mother or artist, a pastor or plumber. In that sense our task is not to find a "Christian" calling, but to hear Christ's call and thus to shape our work into a Christian calling.

We keep in mind that as God has called us to use our energies to transform the world, God also promises to provide gifts and opportunities, and will equip us for the work by his Spirit. Human vocation is an abiding in God and having God abide in us.

Tell Me A Story...

Within a formal ministry context, many of us are likely familiar with stories of "call" and how an individual was led to become a pastor. However, in light of our discussion above, it is beneficial to portray vocation or calling in other terms. We can think back on the past week and all those we encountered--at school, in shops, at work, in our neighborhood. Who exhibited a sense of calling which was evident in their attitude toward others as they went about their daily life and work? There is a first grade teacher who seems to understand her vocation in these terms. Her calling is not so much to being a teacher, but it is to *how* she is a teacher. As one who has been loved by God, she extends love to each of her students, thinking the best of each child and the rich potential inside each one. She engages students and their families with respect and care. The organization of her classroom and the creativity applied to lessons is also a reflection of her understanding of Christian calling. First seeing herself as a disciple of Christ, she then is able to live for God's glory in this specific context. Vocation in this sense is an active engagement in which she lives in relationship with God and is guided by the power of the Holy Spirit. This teacher is an example of one who lives for God's glory in gratitude.