

“The Lord has called you”

You got out of bed this morning – dug out the driveway – and drove slowly and carefully to church to hear the Gospel and receive the Lord’s Body and Blood. But maybe you’re asking yourself – “what do these Scripture readings have to do with me?”

The Old Testament and the Gospel involve the Lord calling His servants to do His work – to “follow me.” “But I’m not a priest (like Samuel)” you say – “or an apostle like Philip or Nathaniel.” “These readings sound like words for a pastor” – and so, the temptation is to close your ears – stare out the window to see if it’s snowing or blowing. It would be easy for your mind to wander off, thinking, “these words are not for me.”

Not so fast. Did you listen to the Epistle reading from 1 Corinthians? Do they apply to you? Do you have a body? Does your stomach control you (how did Christmas go with all the goodies)? Do you have sexual desires that lead you into immorality?

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ” Do you not know that you are joined to the Lord? “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you?” Don’t you know that “you are not your own”?

God has called you to be His own and has united you to Christ in Holy Baptism. Why? For what purpose? “To live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.”

In other words, He calls you to “follow me” – to live in His kingdom according to His Word. That means using your body for His purposes – fleeing from sexual immorality – and glorifying God in your body.

The Lord who has called you into His Kingdom has good use for you. He has chosen you to be His instrument – one through whom He Himself is at work for the benefit of others. You are like the Virgin Mary – His chosen one – through whom He gives the good news of great joy that is for all people.

In a miraculous way, the Lord conceived the child in the womb of the Virgin. God alone is the Creator of all life – He is the One responsible for every child that is conceived.

Every child conceived is a miracle – God’s doing, God’s work. That is why you are to confess what the psalmist says about the Lord – “For you formed my inward parts, you knitted me together in my mother’s womb.” (139:13)

And if the Lord has created life in your womb, then He has called you to be a mother – and as a mother, He calls you to “follow me.” To be a mother is one of the greatest vocations – it is to be God’s instrument through which He gives life. And if there is a mother, then there is also a father.

Are you a father? Then God calls you to “follow me.” Now fathers, don’t be like Nathaniel, questioning how God chooses to work in this world. To be a father is also a great vocation – one with special duties – chief of which is to bring your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Through you, the Lord guides and cares for the life that He has created. Through you, your child hears the Word of the Lord so that he might believe in Jesus Christ – and believing, have life in His name.

You may not be a father or a mother – but the Lord also has good use for you! Are you single, a widow, a student, a citizen, a co-worker? Then “follow me” the Lord says.

Now, to “follow” Him means that you must first be a hearer of the Word – so that you may know what He has called you to do – so that you may realize how He has chosen to be at work in you, and through you, for the benefit of others.

Here is where the discipline and instruction that He gives in the Ten Commandments are so important. Luther’s meanings in the Small Catechism are so helpful here – telling us what the Lord wants us to do, and not to do.

See your fellow student? Use your body and life for their good. Use your mouth to defend them – to uphold their reputation – to help them to do, and not do – according to the Word of the Lord.

See your neighbor? See their physical needs? How can you help to support their body and life? Maybe that means giving them food to eat – or shoveling out their driveway. Maybe that means giving them a ride – or comforting them when they mourn the death of their loved one.

As one united to Christ in Holy Baptism – as one who follows Him – this is how God is at work in this world to care for the neighbor. He uses you! What a blessing and a benefit – for you and for your neighbor.

It's true, God calls some men to be His pastors – yet one more way that He is at work for your good. He not only gives us His Word and Sacraments – but He gives us a man to be His mouth and His hands – so that you may hear and receive the good news of your salvation.

Through these means, these instruments, God is at work in this world – ruling and reigning over your sin. God's own Son sheds His blood and covers you so that your sin and death may be replaced with His freeing-forgiveness and His everlasting life.

“Follow me” He says to you today. What does this mean? It means hearing His absolution and receiving His service in faith, with your “amen.” It means coming in repentant joy to receive His medicine of immortality – His very Body and blood, raised to life on the third day – to resurrecting you to a new and everlasting life.

Dearly beloved, God has good use for you. “Follow me” first means to receive – and then to give. Glorify God by receiving His good news of salvation – and glorify God in your body with your service to your neighbor – your husband or wife, your father or mother, your children, your friends and neighbors – whomever the Lord has placed around you – so that HE might serve them.

So, with Samuel, we say – “Speak [O Lord], for your servant hears.” Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Nicene Creed Installation of Officers & Board Members [postponed]

Prayer of the Church