

6 Easter Year C

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Acts 16:9-15; Psalm 67; Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5; John 5:1-9

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The second half of the Book of Acts reads like a travel journal.

Full of stories where St. Paul and his companions travel here and there throughout the Mediterranean world...

Throughout the Roman Empire.

They stay in some places for years...

Other places they stay for a short time.

Our own little segment of reading from Acts 16 mentions Troas, Samothrace, Neapolis, and Philippi.

They meet all sorts of folks on these journeys.

Some became followers of Jesus.

Some do not.

Our first reading today is a snippet from these travel narratives.

The primary purpose of the author Luke is to show how through the Holy Spirit the gospel was preached and spread throughout the known world even to non-Jewish people...

Gentiles...

Which is why it follows the missionary journeys of St. Paul who is known as the apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul was called by God...

He was converted to the Christian faith on a journey to Damascus.

Paul was called to share the good news of Jesus as an apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul was called even more specifically to certain ministries in his life...

As is the case in our reading today.

We heard these words:

During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

This is often dubbed the Macedonian Call.

God spoke to St. Paul through a dream...

Through a vision at night...

To come and share the gospel of Jesus Christ with the people of Macedonia.

And so, Paul and his companions did just that.

They were called to it.

Well, today I want to talk about your calling.

Did you know you are called?

If you can hear my words today...

You are called by God!

In fact, I believe there are at least four ways that you are called by God.

There are probably more than four...

But for today's purposes...

We have four ways that we are called by God.

First...

You are called to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Some of you have answered this call...

Perhaps some of you have not yet responded to God's calling.

But God is calling every person to follow him.

The scriptures declare:

...God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus...

(I Timothy 2.3-5)

No matter who you are...
No matter what you have done...
God is calling you to follow him.

All people have sinned (Romans 3.23)...
All people are in need of a savior...
And that savior is Jesus Christ our Lord.

He came so that we might have life (John 10.10)...
He came to die so that we would live...
Through his death...
His sacrifice on the cross...
He has provided a way to us for eternal life.

This is the gift of God (Romans 6.23)...
That whoever believes will have eternal life.
With the confession of sin...
With belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior...
God's grace fills us...
His Holy Spirit comes within us...
And we become born into the people of God.

Baptism comes next...

A sign and seal of the covenant and grace of God in our life.

As is the biblical design in our baptismal liturgy.

Jesus calls all of us to follow him...

To be his disciples.

So, that's number one.

Second...

You are called to live holy.

The outflow of this saving grace in our life...

The ministry of the Holy Spirit in our being...

Is to begin to change our life, our thoughts, our world view...

To become like Christ.

That is what the word Christian means...

To be little Christs.

Jesus calls us to be holy...

To live according to his will and not our own.

And we discover more and more of who God is and who we are to be through his holy scriptures.

We are not to live by the world's standards...

Comparing ourselves to the ways and means of this world.

But by the standards of God.

Jesus said:

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last...

(John 15.16)

St. Paul wrote:

He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.

This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time...

(2 Timothy 1.9)

St. Peter wrote:

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy

(1 Peter 1.15-16)

You see when we become a follower of Jesus...

A Christian...

We are no longer to operate by self-autonomy...

That we are our own person.

That is what our culture and society says...

“Be your own person”

“Follow your own heart”

These are the mantras of our culture.

But we are not our own.

The holy scriptures say:

You are not your own; you were bought at a price.

Therefore honor God with your bodies.

(1 Corinthians 6.19-20)

We are servants of the living God...

We are to live according to the call of God in our life...

We are called to live holy.

Alright...

That's the first two ways we are called.

Third...

You are called to be a minister.

When we follow the calling of Christ, we become his ministers in this world.

Too often in the church...

we use this word minister in only a professional way...

As if a minister was only a special position in the church...

some sort of paid professional position in the church and society.

If I was to say John Smith is a minister...

We and our culture assume that John Smith is some sort of priest or pastor at a church.

But the truth of scripture and the truth of our theology as found in our prayer book is that all followers of Jesus Christ are ministers.

We find this very clearly in our catechism.

On page 855 in our Book of Common Prayer it asks this question:

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons.

So all followers of Jesus Christ are ministers.

Lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons are different callings within the confines of ministry...

But nonetheless all Christians are called to be ministers of Jesus in this world.

The catechism goes on to spell out the ministry of the laity...

It reads:

*The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church;
to bear witness to him wherever they may be;
and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ's work of
reconciliation in the world;
and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the
Church.*

So all of us...

Lay and clergy...

Are called by God to minister the good news of Jesus Christ in this broken world.

And finally, Fourth...

You are called to serve in your gifting and place.

All of us have a gift...

And we are called to offer that gift to the Lord and his people.

St. Paul writes:

We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.

If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith;

if it is serving, then serve;

if it is teaching, then teach;

if it is to encourage, then give encouragement;

if it is giving, then give generously;

if it is to lead, do it diligently;

if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

(Romans 12.6-8)

We should use these gifts for building up the body of Christ.

We should use these gifts to encourage nonbelievers to a place of belief in our Lord Jesus.

And we do so in the place that we live.

Where we live is our mission field.

It is the place that we are called to.

Some of us...

some day may be called to a different place to serve and minister...

Just like the missionaries our parish supports in Thailand.

They are called to that location.

To those people.

I know for myself and my wife and family...

We are called to minister Christ right here...

At St. Edward's in Mount Dora...

And in the surrounding area.

This is the place that we were called to...

Back in July of 2016.

(Wow! Time flies.)

Where we work...

Where we spend time in leisure...

Where we go to eat...

Where we go on the internet...

These are the places that we are called to minister to.

And with our gifts...

Empowered by the Holy Spirit...

We are called to serve in the places we are called.

So, God is calling all of us.

He is calling us in different ways.

He is calling us to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

He is calling us to live holy lives.

He is calling us to minister the good news in this world.

He is calling us to serve with our gifts in our location.

May we follow the calling of the Lord.

May we yield to the Spirit.

Sharing the good news...

Building each other up...

As we wait for the second coming of our Lord.

May we be faithful...

Amen.