



Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. **AMEN**

I read a great quote at the beginning of the week and it really stuck with me. It was a statement from American novelist Frederick Buechner. He said, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Isn't that just profound. A place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet. That my friends is an awesome definition of a calling.

Whether you have a job or are retired, whether you have or had a great career you also have a third reality, a calling. What do you think of when I say calling. No not calling someone on the phone. When you hear the word calling, do you immediately think of a pastor or priest that has a calling to the ministry? Rarely do you hear someone speak of being a priest as a job or career path. True? Celebrated sociologist Robert Bellah sees a calling in this way: a calling links what we do to a larger community wherein we contribute to the common good. A calling links a person to the public world.

Today, people follow a calling because they believe it is right for them to do so. It may be a hard road and not always successful or lucrative, but there is rich

meaning and significance in following a call. After reading this week, these are a few things that I believe to be true about a calling.

A calling is there when you don't have a job.

A calling is there even if you don't have a career.

A calling can be more or less than a job.

But a calling is a calling when someone calls you to it. Not quite as profound as our statement from Brueckner, but true none the less.

People ask me when I first had a calling to the ministry. I cannot pin point a day or time, nor can I say a certain thing made me feel called. For me it was like a phone call in my heart and stomach that just keep ringing and ringing. It would not go away, kinda like an annoying ache. Yes, it took a while to discern that it was God calling me, not my Celiac's disease acting up, when I finally realized it was God summoning me, the call was made clear. And folks, I believe that you too are all called.

It is God who calls each one of us. We are told in scripture that we are called by name. God calls us to a full and abundant life. Call it divine intervention when we realize that He is calling us. How many times have we admitted that God works in mysterious ways? How He calls each one of us is different, often hard to recognize and yet powerful.

This morning we have a wonderful and one of my favorite Bible stories about Samuel. Here is a young boy who lives and works in the temple. His mentor is Eli, who is struggling with keeping the God of Israel at the forefront not only in how own life, but that of those around him. One night God comes, opps calls Samuel and Samuel thinks it is Eli calling him. This happens a few times and finally Eli realizes that it is God calling Samuel and tells the boy to go and listen carefully and obey when the voice of God speaks to him again. Samuel listens and obeys the voice of God. God called Samuel that night to be an important figure in the history of Israel.

In our Gospel story today Jesus is calling His disciples. It tells of the encounter of Philip and Nathanael being called by Jesus. Philip invites Nathanael to "come and see" this Jesus, son of Joseph of Nazareth. Nathanael smarts off and

says that nothing good can come from such a ram shackled little town like Nazareth.

But then Nathanael is spun around by his encounter with Jesus, as Jesus knew about his revelation under the fig tree. Nathanael becomes a disciple as Jesus calls him to follow.

You see both of these two guys, the youngster Samuel and the smart aleck, Nathanael recognized their calling. Not recognizable at first but their purpose come to light, their call comes alive when God steps in again and again.

So folks I think that there is hope for us too. We all have a calling in life. Some of you may have found it and are following it today; others are still discerning what God's purpose is for your life. Whether you are at the beginning, middle or nearing the end of your life, God is calling each one of us to better things. Better than our society says to us. Better than our families tell us. Better than we probably say to ourselves.

And so what are these better things that God has in mind for us. Remember, your calling exists in that place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet. God is leading us there, calling us by name.

One of the most interesting men I have read about lately is Albert Schweitzer. Do you all know who he was? Born in France in 1875 Schweitzer was a theologian and scripture scholar. Being a PK (pastor's Kid) his interest in God was started at a young age. By 9 years old he was playing the organ at worship services his father and grandfather led. He had an exceptional musical ability and preformed recitals that drew enthusiastic audiences. Schweitzer was also, drum roll here, Lutheran. Well respected as a writer, philosopher, teacher as well as musician and theologian, one would think that Schweitzer had found his calling.

But Schweitzer did not stop listening, and evidently God did not stop calling his amazing man to broaden his scope in life. In 1913, at the age of 38, he went back to school and got his MD. He then abandoned his academic career and headed off to Africa to serve as a medical missionary. In the place he started his hospital there were no universities, no organs but only plenty of sick people to help. After having to rebuild his hospital a second time, he continued with his wife of 45 years, Helene to treat sick people that came to

him from miles away. I can only image that the deep hunger of those African people were met with his deep gladness and joy.

And I do not imagine that many of us here are called to do what Schweitzer did or even a piece of it. Nor do I suspect any of us will receive a Nobel Peace Prize as he did. But we can learn from his story and listening to others people's stories. People who have helped our great nation, like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr. and the like can inspire us to listen for God's will in our lives. We would do well to take courage from how they responded to God's voice speaking to each one of them.

We also though need to remember to listen closely as we talked about last week. And make sure we are following the right voice. Many voices calling us today are not God's voice. Only God, who sent his only Son into the world to die for us, to save us from ourselves and graciously giving us forgiveness, abundant and eternal life, will call us to do His will. We need to listen carefully to His call and His call alone. And then, we need to believe we are called to make a difference in the world and then when we act on that call, we too will have great deep joy and gladness in our soul.

So no matter how God is calling you, listen intently as He often speaks in a small still voice or even in the turmoil of daily events, so you can act on the call. Whether it be to write notes to shut ins, take the recycling home from church, making quilts for LWR, caring for creation, nursing a sick animal back to health or feeding the hungry, whatever your call is, do it with dignity in the name of God, the Father and you will be blessed with great joy.

AMEN

