

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity

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[0 : 00] If there is one word that captures the theme of the readings for this 17th Sunday after Trinity, it is the word vocation.

! We often think of vocation as synonymous with job, and it certainly involves our employment.

But vocation is more than a job that we perform. Vocation means service, or we could even say the ministry that God has given to each one of us.

St. Paul goes on to say here in Ephesians chapter 4 that we are to live out our vocation with all lowliness and gentleness, with long-suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Vocation, therefore, is not a mere job to perform. It is a life, a life that we are called to live as baptized Christians. Another way of saying this is that because we are in Christ as baptized children of God, we are to live out the life and the virtues of Christ in whatever realm, whatever station, whatever situation where the Lord puts us.

[1 : 51] With that in mind, let's look again, let's revisit our Old Testament reading from Jeremiah chapter 13 this morning. We heard how Judah had fallen into the hands of her enemies, that is, the Babylonians.

Why? Well, according to Jeremiah chapter 13 verse 17, we heard those words from the prophet Jeremiah, My soul will weep in secret for your pride.

My soul will weep in secret for your pride. My eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears because the Lord's flock has been taken captive.

In Ephesians chapter 4, St. Paul says that we are to walk in our vocation that God has given to us in all lowliness, gentleness, and longsuffering.

And here in Jeremiah chapter 13, we hear how the people of God are now going into captivity because of their pride, which meant they began ignoring God and living life only for themselves.

[3 : 04] They became self-consumed and self-centered rather than focusing upon serving God, loving God, and serving neighbor and loving neighbor.

Both Ephesians chapter 4 and Jeremiah chapter 13, therefore, really lays the groundwork for what we heard here in our gospel reading of Luke chapter 14 this morning.

Here in Luke chapter 14, we heard how Jesus went to eat bread, which is another way of saying he went to have a meal on the Sabbath day with a chief Pharisee.

But this invitation was not a gesture of hospitality to our Lord. It was a trap for our Lord. There was a man present who had dropsy.

Now, dropsy is a medical condition of the swelling of the legs due to heart disease or congestive heart failure, or it could be caused by kidney or liver disease.

[4 : 12] And so Jesus asked a question to these leaders on whether or not it would be lawful to heal on the Sabbath day. And the religious leaders did not answer him.

So our Lord went ahead and he healed the man with dropsy. Jesus then said, which of you having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?

We then read the response of these religious leaders with those words, and they could not answer him regarding these things. Here is the main point.

This is the main point. We have been given a vocation by God. Our doing, however, flows from our being in Christ.

And the first step of living faithfully in our vocation is cultivating a life of humility and a life of service to God and to others.

[5 : 19] Because that is the way of our Savior. We heard in Jeremiah chapter 13 how Judah was being judged because they had been swallowed up by pride, which meant they only lived for themselves.

They were only living on their own terms, ignoring the word of God. And the great Babylonian empire would be the Lord's instrument to humble his people, Judah, so that they would return to him.

And Jesus takes this one step further in our gospel reading by saying that our concern for others really reflects our own hearts. So the question is, are we prideful people who only care about ourselves?

Are we people who are obsessed with rules to the point that we show no mercy to others? Our vocation, our calling in life is to seek God in humility and then seek to minister to others by living as servants of our God in whatever station and situation which is our God-given vocation.

And that's what our Lord demonstrates when he heals this man with dropsy. The regulation of the Sabbath was not more important than the suffering of this poor human being.

[6 : 53] So how do we live out our vocation today? The way we do this begins with our neighbor. And our closest neighbor is our spouse.

For those that are married, do we seek to lift up our spouse? Or do we tear them down by our own self-centeredness? Men, do we help around the house by pitching in to cook, clean, do laundry, or help out with the kids?

In all the talk of masculinity today, our Lord epitomizes what a real man is. It's not one that puffs out their chest and acts tough.

No, a real man is one who serves and sacrifices himself like our Lord did for his church, his bride. Wives, do you support and help your husband by encouraging him or being available to him?

Or do you distance yourself, refusing to reconnect with your spouse? Do you push your husband away, seeking to focus solely on your kids or on your career and not your marriage?

[8 : 17] Children, do you help mom and dad around the house, seeking to honor and obey your parents by listening to them and by learning from their years of experience?

Or do you just write them off as being out of touch, clueless, and a bit annoying because they might contradict what you heard on TikTok? Do you listen to the craziness on social media or your friends more than the wisdom of your parents?

In our employment, are we willing to go beyond what's required by our employers to do whatever is necessary to get the job done?

Or do we seek to do the very minimum possible, always playing the victim card? Students of all ages, whether that's in elementary school or college, do you seek to be disciplined, doing your papers and projects on time, avoiding procrastination?

Do you avoid cheating, even though everybody else is doing it, especially in this world of AI? Do you avoid cheating by striving for honesty and integrity?

[9 : 40] In relationship with others, do we all seek to serve others? Do we seek to help the elderly by visiting and caring for those in need?

Do we reach out to the hurting or those in financial straits, desiring to help others in whatever way we can?

Or do we isolate and do we hide from others? Because it's easier to stay away from people, which is another characteristic of pride.

In other words, do we seek to humble ourselves before our God, seeking him, seeking his counsel in a world that seems completely unhinged and upside down?

Do we pray? Do we pray? Do we pray? Do we read the word of God? Do we ask the Lord to change us, to make us more selfless, so that we might become more and more conformed and changed to his ways rather than the ways of this world?

[10 : 51] Or do we scroll on our phones or listen to doomsday prophets in the news that creates further fear, anxiety, and paralyzes us from actually serving God and serving others?

Do we serve Christ by serving in his church, his bride, seeking to use our gifts and talents to the glory of God while ministering to the body of Christ?

Or is our religion just merely in our heads? As baptized Christians, we are all given various vocations by God.

That might be his husband or wife. That might be his son or daughter. That might be his student or employee. But no matter where the Lord has called us to serve, we are called to humble ourselves, to be gentle, and to be caring and honest people, always going the extra mile for others.

We are not to be lazy. We are not to be slothful people. But those who seek to put away our stubborn pride and walk in the way of humility, which is the way of our Savior.

[12 : 11] And we are to grow in the love, sacrifice, and the unselfish mercy of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and extend his grace and his kindness and his love to others.

That's why we're here on this earth. To be people that love God and then extend his love to others. As we heard and are reminded of in the very last words of our gospel text this morning.

For whoever exalts himself will be humbled. But he who humbles himself will be exalted. Dear people of God, let us embrace and practice our vocations as humble servants of our King, Jesus.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. Amen.