

Pastor Roy's sermon from May 31, 2015 (Holy Trinity)

What does it mean to be called? I remember playing in the neighborhood as a child and hearing my mother's voice, "Rooooooy!" -when it was dinnertime. Such a good neighborhood in which to grow up. When mom called, you came! During the summer, we'd hear the same around sunset. Growing up, my parents gave us a good bit of freedom, but we knew the limits and what would please them or cause them to be upset. They didn't always have to call by voice, we got to know what they wanted and what would upset them. There is a sense of calling in the will of a parent and the obedience of a child.

Is not the call of God similar to the call of our parents? Isn't it something which we all receive and know? Not just for pastors and missionaries? Or is everybody called? And to what? How do we know that we are being called? Must it be a profound vision like Isaiah or Abraham, or Moses, or Samuel, or Jeremiah or Paul had? Abraham's grandson Jacob seemed to have ongoing call visions. An angelic ladder to heaven. Wrestling with God. A cheating uncle, a forgiving brother.

Someone recently pointed out to me that the most memorable call experiences to which the biblical saints say "Yes!" are not the beginning of a call, but the conclusion of a series of events by which God calls and invites ending with openness to God's will and way. Abraham is called but he is not a priest or pastor, he is a shepherd, a manager, an agribusiness entrepreneur called to a new land where his children might live out their lives in faithfulness. God's call is clarified as he lives his life.

So being called does not mean we have to be pastors or missionaries. Simply to be faithful to whatever God's Spirit invites us to be and do. Are we not called according to the gifts with which God blesses us? Gifts such as generosity, friendship, creativity, of making something beautiful, of leadership and planning events, gifts of mechanical ability, of sewing, of cooking, gifts of caring for parents and children and animals and plants, the gift of visiting the sick, the weary, the lonely, the gift of envisioning the future of a community, such as the church, or any institution within a community. The gift of loving, listening, of giving, of service, of compassion, of grieving, of faith, of prayer for our own sanity and for the healing of others.

Do you see? Anything that builds up, that edifies, that gives courage, or hope, or builds peace is a calling. You are called to serve, you are called to be "you," to be the best "you," the "you" God created "you" to be. God does not call us to be what we cannot be, or do what we cannot do. God calls us to joy because God's call is always possible to fulfill as long as we live. Challenging, yes, requiring sacrifice, yes, testing our resolve to be faithful to this call, yes. God calls us in ways that interest us, in ways that make us more fully whole, that make us more fully "us."

So to what is God calling you today? What has been your call through the years? Have you seen your work, your abilities, your hobbies, your strengths and gifts as a calling?

Here is a final, important reminder. Isaiah's call is to preach to a people who will not listen. He will fail to convince the people to follow God faithfully. It wasn't for lack of trying. But the message had to go out in faithfulness. Sometimes our callings will not make sense. Sometimes we will not accomplish much at all. We will feel like failures. Yet God calls us to faithfully live out our call. God is not calling us to be obnoxious! God is calling us to love, to care, to give of ourselves whether we feel successful or not. Herein is our freedom to stop worrying about results. Perhaps we can avoid the temptation to manipulate and force our agenda.