

*Consider Your Calling*

The Baptism of Our Lord

The First Sunday after Epiphany

January 7, 2024

Matthew 3:13–17

Consider your calling, Brothers and Sisters. Not many of you are powerful or wise in the eyes of the world. Non-Christians may think you don't have a lot going for you. The beliefs you hold to may be scoffed at as out of touch or as simple fairy tales. And it's true that what you hold to as a Christian and who you are as a child of God may not offer you much in the way of the world. But consider your calling. Consider that you have something the world does not have. Consider that what society lifts up as valuable is nothing more than a mist. Consider that what the world sees as the weakness of your Christian faith is actually the most valuable, the most powerful thing there is. You have something far beyond life in this world, you have eternal life.

Consider your calling. It doesn't look like much, but that is all the more reason you need to hold on to it. It is who you are in Christ. You are a child of God. You are an heir of eternal life and everlasting glory. In the Epistle reading for today Paul is writing to the Christians in the city of Corinth. Many of the people in that society prided themselves in being enlightened and wise and open-minded. It was a pluralistic society. Sound familiar? They had no use for a prophet who spent His life in a remote area of the world and whose life ended in a humiliating death on a cross. Paul takes these Christians back to who they are in this very crucified Lord by exhorting them to consider their calling.

Being in Christ means being in this very one who was in fact crucified. That is a horrible death. It was an excruciating punishment for criminals. But this was His greatest glory. It was in fact His own calling. The Old Testament reading this morning speaks of the one God would send as Savior. God speaks of Him as His Servant. His Servant is His chosen one. He is the one He has called in order to bring about salvation for His people. This is alluded to in the Baptism of Jesus which we heard in the Gospel reading today. The Servant of God in the Old Testament reading would be anointed by the Holy Spirit and that is exactly what happened when Jesus was baptized, the Spirit of God descended on Him as a dove.

When Jesus came to John to be baptized John knew something wasn't quite right. John had been called to pave the way for the Messiah. He was calling people to repent of their sins and baptizing them for the forgiveness of their sins. He said that he was only baptizing people with water but the one coming after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. When Jesus came to John, John realized that this wasn't what was happening at all. Jesus came to him to be baptized and John tried to deter Him: "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?"

Jesus stays firm in being baptized by John. He says to John, "Allow it for now." We can agree with John that Jesus did not need to be baptized. He had no sins to confess, He did not need to repent. He is without sin and so does not need forgiveness. Why was Jesus being baptized with just such a Baptism? Jesus gives the answer. "Let it be so now for us to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus alone is righteous. We are not. Jesus wasn't repenting, He was fulfilling for us what we could not do.

The same question could be asked of Jesus' birth and His death. Why was Jesus born? Why did He die? It was not for His own sake but for ours. He was born in order to be our Savior. He suffered on the cross in order to take away our sins. In the same way He was baptized for our sake. As Jesus humbled Himself by being in the womb of Mary and being born of her and by humbling Himself even to the point of death, so here He humbled Himself by being baptized. In plunging into those waters of

Baptism He was joining into solidarity with us, that is, with sinners. In being baptized with a Baptism of repentance He was taking into Himself all of our sins.

Jesus was showing that His bringing about salvation was through humility. When we pay heed to our sin and our need for repentance the world views that as weakness. And it is. But what the apostle Paul is saying to the Corinthian Christians and what Jesus is showing in being baptized is that this is exactly what we need. In our weakness is our strength. Jesus did not sit on His throne from on high to leave us to our doom. He stepped down from His throne to come to us right where we need. In His weakness and humility is His greatest strength and glory. This is so because He humbled Himself in order to raise us up. This is the way our sins are forgiven.

This is why also He has given us Baptism. As God the Father spoke from heaven when Jesus was baptized and the Holy Spirit descended on Him as a dove so are we blessed by the Father and the Spirit in our own Baptism. God was anointing Jesus in His Baptism and calling Him. Jesus considered His calling from His heavenly Father and freely submitted to it, humbly carrying out His ministry and humbly going to His death.

Consider your calling. Jesus instituted Baptism for us in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit to call us to eternal life. In your Baptism your sins are forgiven. In Baptism you were brought into the eternal family of God, being now His own dear children. As God the Father spoke to Jesus at His Baptism, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased,” so He speaks to you in your Baptism. You are His beloved son, you are His beloved daughter. As the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus at His Baptism, so the Holy Spirit has come to you in your Baptism. This is your calling, you have eternal life in Christ.

This eternal life you have you live out here in this life. Your life in Christ looks different than those who are not Christians. By the way we Christians live out our lives it can be seen how Christians live differently than the ways of the world. We are not wise in our own eyes, Christ is our wisdom. We have no power of our own, our power is in Christ. We do not seek the accolades of the world, we rejoice that God delights in us.

Consider your calling. It is not in being individualistic, but in being part of this community of believers. It is not in trying to achieve success according to the world’s standards, but in humbling ourselves as Christ has humbled Himself to serve us. It is not in submitting to the wisdom of society that promotes tearing down our humanness as being male and female and tearing down marriage being between only a man and a woman. We submit to God’s creation of us and promote a husband and wife teaching their children to be godly and decent people. Our calling is to submit to God’s wisdom as revealed in His written Word.

We prayed in the Collect of the Day that as His Son was baptized our Father in heaven proclaimed Him His beloved Son and anointed Him with the Holy Spirit, that He would make us who are baptized in His name faithful in our calling as His children and inheritors with Him of everlasting life. Faithfulness, that is exactly what we need. Consider your calling, consider who you are. Consider *whose* you are. You are baptized by the Father into Christ through the Holy Spirit. You have life the world in its highest wisdom can never understand and a calling in which you love them and bring them this Gospel of Jesus saving people from their sins. This is true wisdom and the highest calling. Amen.

SDG