



## Called by god

Rev. Mark A. Medina  
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The affirmation we have in the Sovereign God gives us the reason for our existence of life as well as the focus of our faith. Today, we continue our sermon series on the beliefs of those in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We lift up what it means to be called by God and to live out our call in the world.

Everyone one of us had a different experience when God called us to accept that invitation from him and to follow his Son Jesus. If I were to ask you to share your experience, I am sure they would be varied and probably emotional. The moment we make our decision to follow the Lord, our life is transformed. It is renewed and it is change. This new way of serving God is to action rather than complacency.

You know, there are some who are aware of the Lord and his offering of salvation and grace but have not fully given their lives over to him. They just need to hear a confident invitation so they can come and see Jesus. The Lord awaits their response to his call and maybe our response.

I have known individuals who are on the threshold of making a commitment for the Lord but hesitate because of what the Lord is calling them to do in their life and with their life. We can recall the wealthy man who wanted to know what it would take to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus said to him in Luke 18:22, **"There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, Follow me."** The radical nature of this statement caused the man to turn away. Of course, the Lord did not chase after him as he had chosen a different path to follow.

There are deep roots within the Old and New Testaments that reveal the calling of ordinary people to serve God and called out of ordinary occupations and tasks. Some of those are well known and set the example for us today.

Moses was a convicted killer of one of Pharaoh's task masters and ran away to the land of Midian. After a time there in the wilderness with his new family, he went to Mount Sinai and while tending his sheep he saw a burning bush. Out of the bush God called him to go to Pharaoh and seek the release of the Hebrews. But Moses wanted assurances of who is giving him these affirmations of power to God and to save. God said 'I am who I am'.

Now, Moses was reluctant to go as he tried to get out of his call by saying he was "slow of speech and slow of tongue." (Exodus 4:10b) So Moses pleaded

with God to find someone else to speak for him so God called aaron, his brother, to speak for him. Yet, the main purpose of the call was to free the slaves from their bondage and lead them to a new place and a new life.

Friends, like Moses, many of us fear the call of God because it means we will have to be actively responsible for what God is entrusting us to live. We will have to give up the control of our lives to God. For some of us that is very scary. No one likes to give up control of our lives. Yet God is calling us to live out our faith.

The Gospel lesson from John helps us to see that we too can bring others to Christ. When the Lord went to Galilee, he found Philip and asked him to **'Follow me.'** and he became a disciple.

Another of the new disciples, Andrew found his brother Simon and told him, **"We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ).<sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter.** The Lord gave Simon a new name because there was a different future in mind for him. There was a different purpose for him.

Then Philip went one step further by searching out Nathanael by saying, **'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.'** Even though Nathanael questioned Philip, he accepted the invitation to **'come and see.'** When he went, Jesus already knew in his heart that here was a faithful servant for kingdom work. Jesus knew already that Nathanael was coming to be a part of his band of disciples. Nathanael recognized the Lord when he said, **Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!**<sup>50</sup> Jesus answered, **'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.'**<sup>51</sup> **And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the son of man.'** Nathanael will see great things in life.

Friends, we just never know when God is going to call us out of our ordinary existence because God is the only one who knows what is going to happen. As the Apostle Paul writes in the romans passage for today, <sup>28</sup> **"And we know that in all things god works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> for those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified."**

So what is thing called Predestination? It is a doctrine we believe in and is a difficult concept to understand. God is already calling us, what more can we do in our present state? The belief that God has predestined to call some and not to call others has been a bone of contention for centuries among the many biblical scholars and theologians. Yes, we can question its validity for today. Yet in the Reformed Tradition, we can see that this is an important aspect of doctrine. As it states in the explanation of this pre-knowledge calling, comes from our church's *'What we Believe'* webpage. There are many beliefs that we uphold.

This concept and this doctrine of Predestination, firstly **"...has been connected to a doctrine of God's freedom and of God's lordship over the**

universe, over all creation." Secondly, "the doctrine of predestination re-emphasizes that God alone is Lord. **"That faith comes as a gift from God; we understand that God comes to us with God's grace—to which we can only respond with gratitude.** There is another way of saying this **"God has taken the initiative in giving us these gifts.** Thirdly, **"We can see this doctrine as a source of assurance of God's love for us all. It is a doctrine that gives us confidence as we stand before God as forgiven sinners."** Finally, **"We need to see the doctrine as the reformers did as part of a doctrine of providence: God cares about everything God has created, and God has a purpose for each person who has been created."**

God is the one who created us all. God is the one who loves us and is continually calling us out of our lives, out of our complacency so that we can be about sharing god loves others.

What does it say in the Westminster Confession about God. Do you remember? What is the chief end of man? The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

Mainly, as Presbyterian Christians, you and I have an obligation to reflect on our calling from God with a sense of responsibility to honor our calling as redeemed sinners. It further states in the *What We Believe*, **"Those of us who are called to faith can give thanks for God's initiative in dealing with us so graciously. But most contemporary Presbyterians are reluctant to assume that we know anything about God's purpose for those who seem to have rejected faith. We perceive it to be dangerous to move beyond the mystery of predestination to try to explain what God has not revealed."**

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/what-we-believe/predestination/>

God love us; God extends grace to us all. God is calling us to experience that grace and that love by how we live out our faith in the world. It is a scary thought to go out into the world. But you know, we have to do it because nobody else will. Oh yes, we can ask somebody else to do it or we can wait for someone else to do it. However, when it comes down to it, God is calling each one of us to be about the ministry of grace and offering love.

Paul advocates a response to God's call when he writes, **"...If God is for us, who can be against us? ... it is God who justifies.** Through Christ's death and resurrection, we are redeemed and nothing can separate us from God's love. Paul know that nothing will separate us from God even though there hardships in life.

Paul affirms, <sup>38</sup> **For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,** <sup>39</sup> **neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our lord."** nothing! Christ calls us to be his disciples in the world.

Friends, even in the most difficult and trying times, God has a way of calling to a person to step up and do more in a situation. I know there are many examples in this congregation, many other places as we hear or see. We can see how God has changed people because of a situation.

I want to share with you about a woman named Mary who was a ruling elder in one of my early pastorates in Kansas. She was a hard working farm wife

as well as an elder on the Session. She involved herself in church activities. Her life and faith were strong even during the summer of 1993.

The farm she lived on outside Manhattan, Kansas, was large and mostly on a flood plain. In 1993, the rain poured for days and the creek north of the farm was flowing over its banks. Mary could see the water covering the soybeans as it moved rapidly towards her family's home. She became more frantic as the family planned to move to higher ground and she was filled with fear and uncertainty about what was happening. The flood waters flowed in and around their home up to 4 feet.

As the trauma of the situation progressed, Mary began to realize that God was calling to her to do something with her fear and doubt. She prayed to God that she would write music to honor and glorify him. She wrote "The Holy Spirit filled me with such an urgency to sit at my keyboard as words and music came to me as my hands trembled across the keys. It was amazing and humbling to feel so used as a literal instrument for God. My first song was called 'Come Follow' and it gently encouraged unbelievers to trust and give their hearts to Jesus for he would bring such peace and joy; a sense of the eternal home." Her heightened calling allowed her to express joy and peace as well as calm in her life. She became a different person because music flowed from her to glorify God and to give God honor. She changed. She is a different person today. She knows that God called her to be someone else.

Friends, when God calls us, we are asked to respond with trusting and faithful hearts. When we do, we are charged to actively care for and work with others. We are also called to invite others to come and see Jesus.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, when God calls, we are sent into the community and the world to invite people to come and see the wonderful Savior and Lord who gives abundant life and gives it freely. Each of us has a responsibility to share the love of Jesus with others through word and action. Most of all, you and I are called to live the Christian life with humility, trust, faithfulness, and love. Oh, what a calling to follow Christ and to find a relationship that is full of grace, full of love and full of peace.

There is no fear when we are closet to the Lord and listening to God calling us in the still small voice to serve and to love. So when God calls you, listen to what God is asking and inviting you to do with your life. Complacency is a danger to be avoided.

God is calling us to love one another and that is a call for all of us in the world today.

So the Lord invites us to come to him and follow in his footsteps. The power of his comforting presence is inviting and welcoming people. Just like he invited and welcomed all of us. This invitation to follow him is ever present in all of life. Let us respond with a wholeheartedly, yes, Lord I will follow you; I am accepting your call to be your disciple in the world. That's a call for us every day and is an expectation that the Lord extends to each one of us.

Let us pray: O God, you call us to a time of being in your presence. We do thank you for the life you have given us and yes Lord we know there are many struggles we go through every day with health, with life; with a sense of the world

and the uncomfortableness of the world and the pain of the world. Yet, O God, your Son Jesus came to us in love and how to extend love to others.

You see our hearts and you know what's in them. As you search our hearts, O God, may you continually call us to be faithful in the world and not be afraid of extending love. In Christ name we pray. Amen.

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Scriptural Support:

**Romans 8:28-39**

<sup>28</sup> "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup> For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup> And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

<sup>31</sup> What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all -- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died -- more than that, who was raised to life -- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written:

'For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

**John 1:43-51 (NIV) Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael**

<sup>35</sup> The next day John was there again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> When he saw Jesus passing by, he said, "Look, the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> When the two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means "Teacher"), "where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup> "Come," he replied, "and you will see."

So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. <sup>40</sup> Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. <sup>41</sup> The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). <sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at

him and said, “You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas” (which, when translated, is Peter).

<sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.”

<sup>44</sup> Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. <sup>45</sup> Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” <sup>46</sup> “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip.

<sup>47</sup> When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.” <sup>48</sup> “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” <sup>49</sup> Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.” <sup>50</sup> Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.” <sup>51</sup> He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”