

Vocation – Part 1 of 4

“How are People Masks of God?”

Based on Various Passages

13th Sunday after Pentecost / 12th after Trinity

August 7 & 10, 2008 ► [Thursday at 7](#) • [Sunday at 8:15 & 10:45](#)

Sermon Theme: *God is like the invisible man; He is there but you cannot see Him! God is present and at work in your life to provide for others, even as He works through others for you!*

Introduction: Today is the *first of four weeks* on the topic of *vocation*, which comes from the *Latin word* for “calling.” Today we tend to think of *vocation* as merely our job, *the reason why some attend a vocational school*, but God calls us into *many vocations*:

- We are members of a family (*one person could be a grandfather, father, son, uncle, and nephew at the same time*).
- We work at certain jobs.
- We are citizens of the United States of America.
- We are members of Bethlehem Lutheran Church.

In each *vocation* or *calling* we find ourselves on a *two-way street*:

- We are receiving blessings from God – *as He works through our family, employer, nation, and church.*
- We are instruments of blessing to others – *as God works through us to bless* ✦ *our family members,* ✦ *those who use the goods we produce,* ✦ *the people of our nation, and* ✦ *the members of our church.*

May God use our focus on the topic of *vocation* to transform our everyday Christian lives from *ordinary* to *extraordinary!*

1. **How does God work through People?**

- a. Let's think in practical terms: The Bible says of the Lord: "...you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. (NIV Psalm 145:15-16) *But wait*, do we really receive *from God*? Isn't it the combined action of the farmer, the truck driver, the baker, and the grocery store worker which provide our food? Yes, *in a sense*, but *in reality* it is God Himself wearing ✦ *a farmer mask*, ✦ *a truck driver mask*, ✦ *a baker mask*, and ✦ *a grocery store worker mask*!
- b. God is working in your life: God is wearing ✦ *the mask of a mother* to care for her children, ✦ *the mask of a doctor* to heal your sick body, ✦ *the mask of an auto mechanic* to repair your car, and ✦ *the mask of His Son* to take away your sins! When we remember the reality of our callings – *our vocations*, we will be *encouraged* and *blessed* by the presence of God *in every aspect of our daily lives*!

2. **Does God work through believers and unbelievers?** Yes, whether people ✦ know they are sinners and ✦ trust in Christ alone as their Savior *or not*, God is working through them to provide our needs!

- a. Think about an unbelieving business owner: He may have one concern – *money*, rather than his employees or customers; nevertheless, God works through him to provide *jobs for his employees* and *goods or services for his customers*!
- b. Cyrus, an unbelieving king: This was the situation: Because of *much disobedience to God*, the southern

kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians and many were taken as prisoners to Babylon. At that point the nation of Israel appeared to be over forever, *but God had to restore it so that He could keep His promise to send His Son into the world through the seed and nation of Abraham.* Therefore, God worked through Cyrus, the unbelieving king of Persia. Notice what the Lord said to Cyrus: “For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me. ... I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.” (NIV Isaiah 45:4, 6-7) He even does so through people who do not *acknowledge Him or trust in Him for the forgiveness of their sins!*

3. **Is Anyone an Island?** Are some people actually self-sufficient? *Is it possible for a rare person to function on his own without the almighty God?* Though some may say “Yes,” the Bible says that “God...made the world and everything in it ... he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. ... he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, [furthermore] ‘...in him we live and move and have our being.’” (NIV Acts 17:24-28) All people, *whether they know it or not,* are fully dependent upon God for life, health, strength, and so much more – *especially the great gifts of ✨forgiveness, ✨life, and ✨salvation that are being offered to all through faith in Jesus, who lived without sin in our place, died for our sins on the cross, and rose victorious on the third day!*

4. **Who are we really serving?** We tend to answer according to the people we see – *family members, employers, fellow citizens, and fellow church members* – but Jesus wants us to be aware of an *invisible reality*. In projecting ahead to His *promised* and *certain* return, Jesus described this conversation with those who died *in the one true faith*: “‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’” (Matthew 25:34-40)

Conclusion: Now that we better understand the realities of ✦vocation, ✦God’s presence in our daily lives, ✦God providing for us through others, and ✦God providing for others through us, let us †trust in Jesus Christ as our Savior, †be guided by the Spirit through the Word, and †live extraordinary lives of blessing! And all God’s people said: *Amen!*

Some ideas in this sermon are from God at Work, by Gene Edward Veith, Jr., Crossway Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 2002.

This and other sermons are available on Bethlehem’s website: www.blc7500.com
Please share them with your family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers!
Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Rd., Parma, Ohio 44134, 440-845-2230