

Vocation – Part 4 of 4

“How Are You Being Called By God to Be a Church Member?”

Based on Various Passages

22nd Sunday after Pentecost / 21st after Trinity

October 11 & 12, 2008 ► [Saturday at 5](#) • [Sunday at 8:15 & 10:45](#)

Sermon Theme: As we conclude this four-part series on the topic of *vocation* or *calling*, let us see and *follow* God’s plan for our Christian lives in the area of *church membership*!

Introduction: Today we conclude our four-part series on the topic of vocation – *a word that describes our God-given callings!* So far we have considered our calling as ✦ *workers*, ✦ *family members*, and ✦ *citizens*. Today we focus on our calling (vocation) as church members.¹ Within that one *general calling*, we will consider how God ✦ *has* called us to faith, ✦ *is* calling us to serve, and ✦ *will* call us to heaven!

1. **Called to Faith:** In today’s reading from Ephesians chapter 1 (verses 3-8), we heard *the extremely good news* that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ:
 - a. **Chose us** in Christ – *even before creation* – to be holy in His sight!
 - b. **Predestined us** – *made a decision before time to richly bless us in time* – by adopting us as His very children through Jesus Christ!
 - c. **Redeemed us** – *rescued us* – from our sins through the holy precious blood of Jesus Christ!

¹ For more information, see Martin Luther’s Table of Duties in the Small Catechism.

- d. **Those three words** – *chose, predestined, redeemed* – point to God's plan and God's work to call us to ✦ faith in Christ, ✦ service in Christ, and ✦ eternity in heaven! **God has called us “out of the sinful world and into the Church.”** (120) “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God...” (NIV 1 Peter 2:9-10)
- e. **God did His work** – through *Baptism* (Galatians 3:27) and *His Word* (1 Peter 1:23)!
- f. **God continues to do His work** – through His Word (Acts 20:32) to *keep us* and *grow us* in Christ! Therefore, *let us be diligent and faithful in spending quality time in the Bible every day!*

- 2. **Called to Serve:** St. Paul wrote these words of instruction to the Christians in Galatia: “...serve one another in love.” (NIV Galatians 5:13) **Those called to faith are also called to serve!** Since our faith unites us to the *one body of Christ*, we are called to serve *in harmony within that one body*.
 - a. All Members: *How should we think about our service?* St. Paul wrote: “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. ... [Furthermore,] God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.” (NIV 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 18) As a healthy physical body needs every part to function properly, *the same is necessary for the body of Christ here at Bethlehem Lutheran Church!* Furthermore, as ones called *into the church*, we

should not be using all of our time and energy on the temporary things of the world!

- b. Deacons and Pastors: *They have unique callings within the church*: "...the Twelve [apostles] gathered all the disciples together and said, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.'" (NIV Acts 6:2-4) *Thank you so much to all of you who live-out your callings, which better enables me to live-out mine*, which is for your benefit! *Veith put it this way*: "It is Christ who is preaching, baptizing, [and] presiding at His Supper...through the earthen vessel of the pastor." (123)
- c. Other Church Members: Again, St. Paul wrote: "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. ...If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." (NIV Romans 12:6-8) *Veith put it this way*: "The organist...help[s] the rest of us offer our praises. ... Similarly the boards and committees, the Sunday school teachers, the trustees, the [deacons], the ushers, and the altar guild are all doing their part to serve one another and their fellow members, building up with the pastor the complex, living thing that is the church." (131) *Since we all have some special God-given ability, let us honor God by using it!*

3. **Called to Heaven:**

- a. Life on earth (*before heaven*) – *even for those in Christ* – can be difficult, painful, sorrowful, and more! Such a life “calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints [Christians] who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.” In all such things *we of ourselves are powerless*, but ✦ indwelt by the powerful Holy Spirit and ✦ guided by the strong Word, we are equipped to live with *patience and obedience* until we are finally called to heaven!
- b. The blessed call: St. John wrote: “Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...’” (NIV Revelation 14:13) *And why are they blessed? They have been transferred from this world – of difficulty, pain, and sorrow – to paradise, the very presence of the Lord!*

Conclusion: So now, *having been called to faith and gifted with a special ability*, let us serve within the body of Christ until we are finally called to heaven! 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.

Some practical advice on choosing a church: Veith wrote: “Each Christian should be in the church that he or she thinks has, as close as possible, the whole truth – that is, the best understanding of Scripture” (128).