

Proclaiming His Faithfulness...every day
Third Sunday in Epiphany, January 22, 2006.
RSVP/Vocation Sunday

Lessons:

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

1 Cor. 7:29-31

Mark 1:14-20

The following notes are presented to assist pastors in preparation for RSVP/Vocation Sunday, January 22, 2006. Additional material is available at www.lutheranchurch.ca/RSVP

Central Thought: Lord, aid us all to accept our vocation to be your servants and disciples in life.

DEVELOPMENT

Malady

Many find themselves like the Ninevites, in the great city, pursuing various vocations, like any modern city today, busy, frenetic activity, the dollar supreme, oblivious to the judgment and compassion of the Holy God, a sinning city, a lusting city, if you will like any city on the face of the earth today.

Many are also like Jonah, the prophet, top, reneged on his vocation to be a prophet, the runaway, reluctant, angry, sulking, immature prophet who becomes really upset when the blood enemies of Israel, the Assyrians, can lay claim to God's grace and compassion.

Goal

For all to be encouraged in our faithfulness to the Lord in pursuing our vocations; to serve the Lord in our various walks of life. Remember, God is always faithful to us and His Word and grace and Gospel will remain until the end of time.

Gospel in Jonah

God loved Nineveh and had compassion on Nineveh after all, there were 120,000 little ones who could not tell their left hand from their right hand, Jonah 4:11. (One interpretation says this was a reference to the little children in Nineveh.) God also sent the *Gourd??* to teach Jonah a lesson and to bring him to his senses, to be true to his vocation and to be a true prophet of the Lord. See Mark 1:14-20 for more Gospel.

Outline

INTRODUCTION.

Luther asks whose work is more important, the nun who prays in the convent regularly or the mother who feeds and changes the swaddling clothes (diapers) of the infant child in her care?

Luther says both the work of the sister in the convent and the work of the mother in the family are of equal value in the eyes of God for both are living up to the demands of their vocation. God has called the sister to give devotion to Himself, and God has called the mother to care for the new born child. Both have a vocation; the sister in the convent and mother in her family. The important need is for both to be faithful in their vocation.

What Luther said of the sister and the mother can be said of every Christian and of every pastor. What is important is for all of us to be faithful in our personal vocations. The important truth for all to remember is that God is faithful in giving His love and grace and life through Christ Jesus all the time. This is God's vocation, the redeeming and saving of the world. And God is faithful in His work. And we the faithful; come and adore the Lord. See the great Christmas Carol. *O Come, all ye faithful*, let us worship the Lord.

I PROTOTYPES

A. Nineveh: Prototype of the world. Reflects today's cities, nations, people, culture. Unbelieving, oblivious, sinning, frenetic activity, dollar supreme, evil.

B. Jonah. Prototype of people who lose sight of their vocation and sell out for one's personal agenda. He is the runaway prophet and the angry prophet, and he preaches a great law sermon, but he gets angry when the Ninevites repent and God decided to have compassion on the city. He forgot his vocation, to show that God is also a God of compassion and grace for sinning mankind.

C. God stepped in and proclaimed his compassion for Nineveh. (Gospel)

Amazing, for Nineveh was the great city of Assyria, the blood enemy of Israel, and this Jonah had a hard time accepting.

Apply this to ourselves. We are to hear and believe the whole message and Word of God not just the parts of the message that suit us.. This is our vocation.

i) See the word *NACHAM*. (Jonah 3:10)—to have compassion, to give comfort, to feel grief for, a word packed with meaning. God is compassionate like a mother who cares for her sick child, like a child caring for a pet, like a lover caring for his or her beloved, like a nurse caring for a patient, like a father who disciplines his son in love.

ii) Also see the word *CHESED*. Translated, grace, love, of God to man.

D. The point. Our vocation is to serve the living Lord God, and to proclaim His Word and Message, law and gospel, to the world, especially God's grace and compassion for repentant people

II. Now is the time, the hour, for all of us to remain true to our vocation for the time, the *kairos*, is short. And the world is passing away as we know it.

See the second reading for today 1 Cor 7:29-31.

A. Note the transitory nature of things, people, and relationships. Cars rust, people die, and even the best of relationships sometimes fail.

B. The first, and primary loyalty and allegiance is to Christ, the living Lord God in the flesh. (See incarnational theology.) See 1 Cor 7:35— may you live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. Also hear Christ: Matthew 10:37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me."

C. Therefore our vocation is to live life in Christ. We are Christians, little Christs, faithful to God in life. This is our vocation— to be followers and disciples, and servants of the lord.

III. Jesus calls his first disciples to proclaim the good news of God's kingdom and rule.

See the Gospel reading for today Mark 1:14-20

God who is king and lord, rules in the hearts of people through faith in Christ Jesus. (God's kingdom grows as people of faith are added to God's church by the Holy Spirit through the good news of the Gospel.)

A. The first disciples were called directly by our Lord and followed— Simon, Andrew, James, and John. Christ called and they followed. They changed occupations, went from the fishing industry into being fishers for men, fishers of fish became fishers of men. They answered the call, and chose a new vocation. (Here is a good place for recruitment for church workers can be voiced on behalf of the Church.)

B. There is an urgency. Now is the time. Note the song, *Now is the hour* from the Second World War, "Now is the hour when we must go to war and sail across the sea." This is sort of the idea, the urgency of the call of Christ. Now is the hour for you to consider being an undershepherd of the Lord in the church or to serve His people as a deacon.

C. We all need to repent of our past failures. See *METANOEW*, the U-turn of repentance. Lord, make us faithful to our vocations in life no matter what road we are walking.

D. And we believe the gospel, the *EUAGGELION*, that life and forgiveness is for all in God's kingdom, under God's rule. See the *BASILEIA TOU THEOU*.

CONCLUSION: The spirit and drive of athletes and soldiers is legendary. They often speak about giving 110 per cent. The dedication and service of doctors, nurses, farmers, teachers, lawyers, of every profession is well known and often documented. The Danish theologian, Soren Kierkegaard, often stated that the essence of virtue was to will one thing, and one must be true to this principle. A good question for all Christians and especially for those contemplating full time service in the Church is "Do we have a deep and true understanding of vocation in the life of the church?"

Only a very few are honoured by God by allowing them to be martyred in the name of Christ.

Most of us serve in less dramatic ways, and this too is according to God's will. However, the Lord has called us to service and vocation in His Church. May we all be faithful in our vocations as the Lord is faithful to us. May we all live a life of faith worthy of the Gospel.