**“Call to What?”**

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Psalm 62

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

1 Corinthians 7:29-31 (32-35)

Mark 1:14-20

 Epiphany 3

From Psalm 62: “Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this; that power belongs to God, and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For You will render to a man according to his work.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Bridge

I saw someone’s hopeful writings about the future of our kids through the craziness of these times: “Don’t worry about your kids in the world that they’re growing up in, because God’s **created them for** **this exact moment in time** … their life isn’t a coincidence or an accident.” I’d like to agree; and hope that God’s **specially-equipped** our kids to **well-handle what we’ve gotten them into**. I just don’t think that He’s **created them** any differently than He’s created any of the rest of us (or our ancestors) for the situations we all find ourselves in. I think His creating is all **about the same**; we all have the **capacity** to navigate many things. But an **innate ability that’s unique to an age?** That, **I doubt**, **is innate**.

Our kids are, however, **uniquely called**. The challenges they face aren’t, necessarily, the same as anything that’s come before this. The skills to rise above obstacles **these day**s might need developed in specific ways. But **that God can guide**. The **epiphany** of this 3rd Weekend after the Epiphany is the **divine call of God through Christ Jesus to work according to the directives of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**.

And for this uniquely troubled time, that’s where I think **epiphanies** may be more-urgently **heeded** now than they were **open-to-being** in years past. Not that urgency has changed much … but accelerated, I’d say. Circumstances may make us more **aware of the need**, so ears might be more **ready** to hear its messages. Folks may be more attentive to words of purpose and hope because of things counter to it, maybe all would like **divine purpose** rather than just random or human ideas. It’s possible that the whole world’s more open to **God’s direction (His epiphanies)** than it had been since human direction (or government’s or a community’s) hasn’t worked so swell. What a season Epiphany can be to remind us of a **higher calling and directive** … one (I hope) that’s highly welcomed this year.

May the Lord guide **us** by His directive, because one of the first things He shares is that He “**renders to a man according to his work**”. In other words, **what we DO** **with our time, times and circumstances** (with our **calling and directives** and **how we live up to that** **… and how our children do**) … that’s what we’re judged by … what’s “rendered” to us by God.

And living up to a **divine** calling is not a matter of tapping into **innate** abilities, but the redeemed capacity that can only be shaped by God … His guidance. Called and directed by God, working His direction knowingly by His will, those were the rest of the hopeful words I read from one praying for the success of their kids: they prayed: “raise them up through my help, Lord, to know that they are Yours and Children of God. Help me to instill in them the authority of Your Word. Help me to make them hear and be ready to assume the call to faithfully face the uniqueness of their time. You, Lord, **have** called them (and all of us) for a time **like this**”.

Text

In our Old Testament account, Jonah was **minding his own business** (and, maybe, that’s the critical phrase: “**minding** **one’s own business**”) when God called him to **mind the business of others** (even an **enemy’s**). See, one’s never really minding their own business when neglecting any business that’s also your responsibility. In this case, God had an epiphany that He wanted passed along from Jonah to Ninevites.

You know the story. Jonah neglected to the extreme. He should have **remembered the Psalm passage:** “Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God, and that to You, O Lord, belongs steadfast love. For **You will render to a man according to his work**”. Jonah eventually did the **work that was according to the Lord’s steadfast love**.

Fishermen (4 of them) dropped the nets and left the boats after a lifetime of minding their own businesses just **because of Who said to**. But a dad (Zebedee) sent them off, letting them go for this, not discouraging by at least the absence of words to that effect but, maybe even, encouraging them. Fishing and the **business of much more than just fishing for fish** they were open to … and **went to do**.

John the Baptist was called to be arrested … ultimately killed (but he wasn’t the only martyr to the Gospel cause). And martyrs don’t always die violently. Most often, they die of old age after a lifetime of (for the most part, but imperfectly) **dutifully conducting a business that’s God’s along with (and predominantly over) our own**.

John the Baptist had a mom (Elizabeth) who accepted her call to do **work that was according to the Lord’s steadfast love**. Zechariah (his dad) accepted that divine call, one of those fisherman’s (Peter’s) wife accepted it, probably becoming, herself, one of the 110 who followed Jesus along with her husband. Jesus’ mother, Mary, accepted her call (and we have her acceptance letter in the “Magnificat”). Joseph accepted his. We have documented, in Scripture and history, many who accepted the divine call they received to do God’s work, and they imply many more each in supporters and encouragers and teachers and parents and spouses and parents, pastors and friends.

None, however, was **born** to the calling from Heaven. Each (and the countless un-named) **grew** to learn it and embrace it. They had to be **re-born to it (it’s accurate to say)** and **embrace it from learning of it and concerted effort to do it**.

The call of God is general in that it (in all things) serves the Gospel, yet particular (of course) in context and specifics that are unique to every person, age, time period in their life and growth process, and cultural situation or worldly events. It’s general, again, and the same for all in that it’s **work (all of it) that is, indeed, according to the Lord’s steadfast love**. It may not always be **noticeably that** (in that some of it may be as mundane as brushing your teeth or making your bed), but it’s always (even when basic) **to God’s glory** as everyone who **is God’s** lives and works and walks around, technically, **to God’s glory**. Our baptism gave us the general call to live to Him as His (adopted, so His children). Yet our baptism, also, gave us all our specific divine callings …

… because we and our kids are also **uniquely called**. The challenges we all face (and what we’re passing on to our kids) aren’t, necessarily, the same as anything that’s come before this time. The skills to rise above obstacles **these day**s might need developed in specific ways. But **that God can guide**. The **epiphany** of this 3rd Weekend after the Epiphany is the **divine call of God through Christ Jesus to work according to the directives of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**.

Application

In application, the illustration I posted on the top left corner of our bulletin is Jonah sitting looking over Nineveh (the specific call God sent him to do something about). Think of him as us and our kids and grandkids, looking over the lay the of the land and noticing the needs and opportunities. The choice (I suppose) is to, either, get up and start doing something to meet the needs and do it all remembering who you are in Christ Jesus, **according to the Lord’s steadfast love** and **working that way**, or sit and avoid, ignore and neglect. Wisdom God’s given you would tell you not to neglect … but delay or resist is the devil’s work, and you must not give into that.

A sense of **duty** and **timeliness**, **haste** and **not procrastination**, **urgency** would be helpful to let God develop in you. As the Epistle tells us, “this is what I mean, brothers: **the appointed time has grown very short**. The **present form of this world is passing away**.” …..

You know, even we may spend too much time thinking the short time we have is not worth **divinely** working for. Scripture reminds us of what’s **fleeting**, yet **ours to influence for a divine purpose** in us and our children and grandchildren, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and all who really ought to be encouraged through us and God’s Words to **accept and always put to work the duty of our call from God**.

The times are unique. The situation may not have full precedent. But God (who does not change yet knows fickle winds better than we do) can and does give us strength and courage, words and council to **effect where we are, no matter where that is**.

**Work according to the Lord’s steadfast love!** In +Jesus’ name. Amen, and may the peace of God that does surpass all human understanding **keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus**. Amen.