

Union United Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **Blessed to Be A Blessing, Part 2**

January 15th, 2023. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **Jeremiah 29:10-14; I Corinthians 1:1-9**

1. **Recall from last week: Identity & Purpose**

- *God affirmed Jesus' Identity and Purpose at his baptism*
"a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, my Beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3:17 NRSV
- *Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit - to fulfil his purpose (outlined in Luke 4 and Isaiah 61).* "And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly **the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.**" Matthew 3:16 NRSV
- We each have a unique God-assigned identity and purpose
 - Where, when, and to whom we are born is not an accident (Acts 17:24-28) - important part of our identity
 - We have an added identity in Christ - redeemed, blessed, called, etc. (see sermon and outline of January 1, 2023, on our website)
 - God has a purpose to save the world, and for each of our lives (e.g., Jeremiah 1:4-10 shows the God had a purpose for Jeremiah even before he was born)

Today's sermon is a continuation of what we started last week - we delve further into God's purpose for us, and what provision God has made for us to attain that purpose.

2. **Divine Calling**

- **Example of Divine Calling: the apostle Paul**
Paul started the first letter to the Corinthian church with this statement:
"Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God"
1 Corinthians 1:1 NRSV

He did not make himself an apostle. God specifically called him to that role and assignment. It was the will of God for his life.

He goes into further detail about this in Galatians 1

“But when **God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles**, I did not confer with any human being.”

Galatians 1:15 NRSV

Note again the point that God set him apart for this role as an apostle, a sent one, to proclaim the gospel even before he was born.

o **The universal Church, and every local church, is called**

The Divine Call is for the church to fulfil God’s purposes.

Paul addressed his letter

“To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, **called to be saints**, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours ...”

1 Corinthians 1:2 NRSV

The letter is addressed to:

- The local church in Corinth
- Every Christian. We are all “sanctified in Christ” and call Jesus our Lord.

Significantly, Paul says we are “called to be saints”. Who is a saint? Oxford dictionary definitions

1. a person acknowledged as holy or virtuous and regarded in Christian faith as being in heaven after death.
2. a very virtuous, kind, or patient person.

The New Testament shows us our calling as Christians include:

- To be light and salt of the earth
- To live a holy life before God
- Be witnesses for Christ
- To be in fellowship with Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9)

- **Every Christian is individually called by God to a specific purpose**

This calling is both general and specific

- **God has a plan for each of us:**

11For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with

hope. 12Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. 13When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart,

Jeremiah 29:11 NRSV

- **A primary calling for every Christian:**

Called to be in fellowship with Jesus, the Christ.

“God is faithful; by him **you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.**”

1 Corinthians 1:9 NRSV

- **Created in Christ to good works pre-ordained by God**

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Ephesians 2:10 NIV

In Christ God has re-created us (we are new creation):

“Therefore, **if anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation: The old has gone, the new is here!**”

2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV

- We are called to be Ambassadors of Christ.

“All this is from **God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19that God was reconciling**

the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 NIV

3. Divine Grace for the Call

Paul makes it clear that God has given us what it takes to fulfill the calling we have as a church and as individuals. This ability to fulfil God's call is called Grace.

As Paul puts it,

4I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, In every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— 6just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— 7so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

8He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9God is faithful;

1 Corinthians 1:4-9 NRSV

Our Task

11For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

12Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. 13When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart.