

**First Lutheran Church of Venice
Foundations Class – Fall 2013
Session 9 – Full-Time Christianity: Confession and Your Calling**

Confession

1. Read 2 Samuel 12:1-15 and discuss.
2. Review *Luther's Small Catechism* on Confession

Your Calling

3. When you hear the word *vocation*, what do you think of?
4. "Vocation" and "Calling" are derived from the Latin *vocare*, and its Greek equivalent, *kalein*. The secular world has co-opted this term, using it to refer only to our professional occupation. However, as Christians "vocation" or "calling" (synonyms) have a much broader meaning.
5. Do I have to become a church worker to have a sacred calling?
6. What are we "called" to as Christians?
 - a. Bible passages: 1 Pet. 2:9-10; Eph. 2:8-10, Eph. 4:1; 2 Thess. 2:13-14, 3:6-13

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.... I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called (Eph. 2:8-10, Eph. 4:1).

But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.... Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not

because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. As for you, brothers, do not grow weary in doing good (2 Thess. 2:13-14, 3:6-13).

- b. We are called to *faith* in Christ
 - c. Called to a life of *love of neighbor that flows from faith*
 - d. Freed from a selfish, inward focus (man “turned in on himself” – Augustine) by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our focus is turned outward:
“We conclude, therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, and in his neighbor through love...by faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor” (Luther, AE 31:371, “The Freedom of a Christian”)
 - e. As theologian Gustaf Wingren puts it, “God does not need our good works, but our neighbor does”...
 - f. ...although when we serve our neighbor, particular those in need, we are serving Christ Himself (Mt. 25:40)
 - g. And who is my neighbor? – Luke 10:30-37
7. So many “neighbors.” How do I find my “calling”?
- a. No need to look far! If we are all “priests” serving our neighbor, then every kind of work (provided it is not opposed to God’s Word) is a sacred calling
 - b. Think about vocation or calling less in terms of what we should *do*, and more in terms of what *God does* in and through our vocations to care for His creation and creatures
 - c. We already have multiple callings or vocations, summarized by the Reformers under the categories of:
 - i. Family – Marriage, Parenthood, Being a Child
 - ii. Work
 - iii. Citizen (or Community)
 - iv. Church
 - d. How does God work through you to serve others in these callings?
8. The Sacred Callings of “Ordinary” Life
- a. Family
 - i. Marriage – Gen. 1-2; 1 Cor. 7; Eph. 5:22-33, Col. 3:19, 1 Pet. 3:5-7
 - ii. Parenthood – Prov. 22:6, Deut. 4:9, 6:7, Eph. 6:4
 - iii. Being a Child – Ex. 20:12, Eph. 6:1-3, 1 Tim. 5:4,8

- b. Work
 - i. Created to work! - Gen. 1-2
 - ii. Employer-Employee relationship: Eph. 6:5-9
- c. Citizen (or Community)
 - i. Submission to Authorities: Matt. 22:21, Rom. 13:1-6, Titus 3:1, 1 Pet. 2:13
 - ii. But...Acts 5:29
 - iii. Voting, Public Service, Paying Taxes, Obeying Laws, Praying for officials, etc.
- d. Church
 - i. Being a worshipping and witnessing member of the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16, 1 Pet. 3:15, Eph. 5:15-17)
 - ii. Admonitions to pastors (1 Tim. 1:9, 3:1-7) and to hearers (1 Co. 9:14, Gal. 6:6-7, 1 Tim. 5:17-18, 1 Thess. 5:12-18, Heb. 13:17)
 - iii. Serving one another within the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12)

Helpful resources on the doctrine of “Vocation” or “Calling”

Benne, Robert. *Ordinary Saints: An Introduction to the Christian Life*. 2nd edition. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

Another helpful book, similar in content to Veith’s, but more academic.

Render Unto Caesar...and Unto God: A Lutheran View of Church and State. A report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. St. Louis, MO: The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, 1995. Available online.

Senske, Kurt. *The Calling: Live a Life of Significance*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2010.
More of a practical, “how-to,” guidebook on living out your calling.

Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002.

An accessible introduction to the doctrine of vocation and its significance for your life.

Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. and Mary J. Moerbe. *Family Vocation: God’s Calling in Marriage, Parenting, and Childhood*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2012.

A more detailed look at the vocations of family life.