

Pastor T.C. Arnold
18th Sunday after Trinity
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
September 25th, 20016

This device (my cell phone) can do almost anything. It's the way I communicate through text message to my family, parish family and friends. It gives me directions when I'm trying to find where to go. It is how I find out if the traffic is bad on a particular road and how I know which gas station is the cheapest. This thing is my calendar, my address book, my games, my pictures and videos, my flashlight and my encyclopedia. It's my bible, my catechism, and I even have Greek vocabulary and grammar flash cards to keep my brain sharp (it's not working). Oh ya, and I think this thing is also a phone. So, I've heard, you can make phone calls with it.

Yes, even though many people use their cell phones more for all those things listed above, and less for making phone calls, it still does make and receive phone calls. I almost wonder why we even call it a cell "phone" any more. We use it for so many other things, maybe it should be called a mini know all and do all device. But that seems silly.

Also what might seem silly is to suggest that maybe one of those rare phone calls could actually come from God. What if God called us? I'm pretty sure we'd be quite shocked but also immensely pleased if He did. What if He called us to tell us some good news, to make an appointment with us, to ask us to do something for Him, accept a job, to invite us to His house, or just to tell us that He's thinking about us? It would sure make an impression, wouldn't it?

But I don't suppose that has ever happened. Yet God does call us. His telephone doesn't look like this (my cell phone). No, His phone is His holy Word. There He tells us the Good News of salvation for us. There He makes one appointment after another to be a part of our lives. There He asks us to help with His work. There He invites us to worship Him in His house. There He tells us that He is always thinking about us and is most certainly caring for us. The call is as clear and as real as the cell phone call – that is, if you have good cell phone coverage and the calls don't drop all the time.

St. Paul, the author of this letter to the Corinthians, our Epistle text for today, was called by God. Part of His call was to a specific task. He writes, "*Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God... to the church of God at Corinth.*" Today, we say that pastors are called workers to the churches that we serve. It's similar to Paul's call. However, Paul's call was immediate – a voice from God and a blinding light. My call to serve you as a pastor is a mediate call – that is, through means. The phone call to serve was God calling through His Word. God calls pastors through means – namely – all of you. No, I didn't answer my phone one day and God had a special message for me. No, I never saw anything written across the sky in big letters telling me what to do. You know, it doesn't work like that.

Yet, there are other calls that apply more specifically to you as a believer. There is a call to you from God to be saints. This call goes out to all people "*everywhere who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,*" it says in verse 2. Sometimes that little phrase, "called to be saints" or "called to be holy," bothers people. Saints are supposed to be people who either live very holy lives or have already gone to heaven. In either case, that doesn't describe us, right? I mean, there are saints in the Bible – like St. Paul or St. Matthew, etc... We hear about great men and women of the church being called saints. But we are just ordinary people doing the best we can. Others may be holy, but we are not.

Notice, however, that when we think or talk like that, we seem to be looking for ways of making ourselves holy. No wonder people aren't very sure of such things. They are never really sure

they have done enough – or – not done the big sins that put us behind the 8 ball. But if we are honest with ourselves, we know we can never make ourselves saints. Nor do we have to.

God calls us and says, “I make you holy in spite of what you are. I call you to be my very own saint. I’ll take care of everything for you. You see, I’ve given my Son Jesus to take everything that would keep you from being a saint upon Himself. He died with all of it on the cross. Now I give you righteousness. I give you what only God can give.”

The church in Corinth bickered and squabbled about being saints. Some of their difficulties revolved around status and power – who is better than who. That’s why Paul wrote to them about being called in Christ together. Paul also wrote about unity and faith when speaking of the Lord’s Supper. The church members at Corinth did not live as unified children of God. One group thought of themselves as better than the other. They wouldn’t even take the Lord’s Supper together because of these divisions.

Brothers and sisters – and I call you brothers and sisters for a specific reason – this cannot happen to our Church here. We cannot take up the feeling or belief that we are better than our neighbor. We cannot act as if we deserve more, or are loved more by God because of the way we act, live, or even work. Flee from these feelings of personal, self-imposed righteousness over and above your fellow member and neighbor. We are in this call together. We are called by God into the vocation of Christian together. We all have a part – and we are all “a part” of what God has made us to be. It’s not about you. It’s about Him who has given this church to be “us” – with Him, the saint-maker, as our head. It says in the text, “*God who has called you into fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.*” He is faithful and He keeps His church as one body of Christ together. That’s what we are.

There is another important call we can talk about. It’s the call to Christian service. St. Paul wrote in our text for today, “*You do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for the Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.*” In other words, we have all the gifts necessary to carry out God’s work in this place. No, I’m not saying you possess every gift. Rather, you are equipped with the gifts necessary to carry out God’s work. It’s true that we have the gift to share the Good News about Jesus to our neighbor. And, we have been given the gifts to do the work necessary in this corner of God’s vineyard at Christ Lutheran Church. You are a part of that.

Soon, it will be that time again... Stewardship Sunday. This is the time when we consider the time and talents our Lord has given us and how we are called to use these gifts for the sake of the kingdom. Between now and then, I want you to pray about this. And, I want to challenge you to find a category on that pledge form which you will receive soon that you haven’t considered “checking” before. Is there something you would like to try in service to your Lord and your church? Is there something that may challenge you, and will also benefit you and others? Ask yourself these questions because I want to challenge you. I want you to take on one more thing this coming year. It may be big, it may be small. This is my challenge to you – a called Christian who is called into Christ’s service.

Christ’s service – that’s what we have. That’s what calls us what we are – a Christian – loved by God – His very own – precious to Him – forgiven. You are called. No, your phone didn’t ring. If it did, it might have been me on the other end asking you about a job, a work, a situation. But ultimately, it’s God’s call for you – calling you to life everlasting – calling to call out to others with that same message of hope and salvation. And it is yours. You can count on it. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.