

How called are you?

January 8, 2017

Matthew 3:13-17

What is your name? In German, the question is a bit different. “Wie heisst du?” our German friends ask. Literally, the question is, “How called are you?”

That’s our question for Epiphany. **How called are you?**

First, it’s about *names*. Jesus, **how called are you?** You are called God’s Son—Beloved and well-pleasing to the Father. That is Jesus’ name. In Christ, that is our name as well. In Christ, we are beloved and well-pleasing to the Father.

Jesus, **how called are you?** Second, it’s about *vocation*. It’s about being called. Jesus’ call is the intersection of two roles. He is both Majestic Messiah and Suffering Servant.

Each of these roles shows up in God’s Old Testament Word. “*This is my Son*” is an echo of Psalm two, verse seven. These are royal words, coronation words, king-making words.

“*Beloved*” takes us to Isaiah 42:1. We heard those words in our first lesson. These is the first song of the Suffering Servant in the book of Isaiah.

Jesus, **how called are you?** Majestic Messiah AND Suffering Servant—this is how Jesus is called.

This double calling is like the two parts of a cross. On the vertical section, we see the Majestic Messiah. We see God come among us as King. On the horizontal section we see the Suffering Servant. We see God come reaching out to us in grace and compassion. Jesus is God’s representative to Creation. Jesus is our representative to God. And he is both at once.

Before Jesus, no one ever imagined that these two roles would come together. Lots of people expected God to send a Majestic Messiah. This King would set the world right with a sword and a shield. Some people expected God to send a Suffering Servant. The Servant would set the world right with loving self-sacrifice.

But no one saw that the Messiah and the Servant would be the same person. No one saw that the Messiah’s sword would be the Servant’s cross.

Jesus, How called are you? You the Majestic Messiah AND the Suffering Servant. You are the Beloved Son, well-pleasing to God.

How called are you? We bear the name of the Messiah. Do we also bear his calling?

Yes, we are called to rule by serving. In 1520, Martin Luther wrote a powerful treatise entitled *On Christian Liberty*. There he wrote, “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject of all, subject to all.” In those sentences Luther captured our cross-shaped calling.

Baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection, we now daughters and sons of the King. We are called back into the role of humans at the beginning of Creation. We are freed to represent God for the care and nurture of all Creation. Baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection, we are now disciples of the Servant. We are freed to give ourselves to others with no thought for ourselves, because in Jesus we have everything we could ever need.

How called are you? You are called to live life in the shape of Jesus' cross. In baptism we received the badge of our double calling. "Child of God," someone said, "you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."

You wear the badge on your forehead. But it's good to refresh it regularly. I hope you will take the opportunity when you come to communion or at any other time to dip your finger in the water and mark your forehead with that wet cross. Parents, do it for your children. Do it for one another.

We come together weekly to remember and renew our double calling. We come thirsty for God's Word of grace and hope. We leave filled with that Word so we can share it with a thirsty world.

We cannot answer the call on our own. The first gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift of faith. The dove falls on Jesus to empower him to answer his call. It falls on us as well in our baptisms. Pay special attention in this Epiphany season to the doves on our front walls. Focus there during prayer and meditation. Feel the gentle touch as the Spirit fills you for this journey of grace.

How called are you? In Christ, you are called "chosen" and "beloved." You are called to rule by serving. And you are called to share that good news with others. More on that next week.

Let's pray...

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