

# The Divine Call

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*A Sunday Morning Bible Study  
Lamb of God Lutheran Church  
October 7, 2018*

## **God Calls All Christians His Priests**

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### **Read 1 Peter 2:4-12**

1. Peter uses several different phrases to describe the Church in these verses (chosen nation, holy priesthood, spiritual house). How do people become a part of that Church? (v. 9,10)

2. For what purpose(s) are we called to be priests of God? (v. 9,11,12)

3. Read the passages below, and list responsibilities that belong to all Christians as God's holy priests.

*Colossians 3:16 - <sup>16</sup> Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.*

*Luke 17:3-4 - <sup>3</sup> "So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. <sup>4</sup> If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."*

*Hebrews 13:15-16 - <sup>15</sup> Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. <sup>16</sup> And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

*Matthew 28:18-20 - <sup>18</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

## ***Public Ministers are Called to Serve on Behalf of God's Holy Priests***

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### ***Read 1 Corinthians 14:40***

4. For what practical reason(s) do God's priests choose some to represent them in the *public ministry* of the word?

The term *public ministry* is not found in the Bible. It is a term created by the church. It is used to describe a special way of carrying out the ministry of the Word of God (the ministry that belongs to every Christian). When we use the term *public ministry* we do not mean that it is conducted openly or in front of other people. By *public* we mean *representative*—a public minister represents other people as he serves.

The same work God has given Christians to do in their personal ministry has also been given to called workers to do in a public or representative way.

Luther puts it this way:

*This is the way to distinguish between the office of preaching, or the ministry, and the general priesthood of all baptized Christians. The preaching office is no more than a public service which happens to be conferred upon someone by the entire congregation, all the members of which are priests.*<sup>1</sup>

5. Read the passages below. Because the ministry of the Word has been entrusted to all Christians, what is necessary, if someone is to serve in the public ministry?

*Hebrews 5:1-5 - <sup>1</sup> Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. <sup>2</sup> He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. <sup>3</sup> This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. <sup>4</sup> No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. <sup>5</sup> So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."*

*Romans 10:15 - <sup>15</sup> And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"*

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<sup>1</sup> Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 13: Luther's works, vol. 13 : Selected Psalms II* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ps 110:4). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

The Augsburg Confession, Article XIV, puts it this way:

*Concerning church government it is taught that no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call.<sup>2</sup>*

Luther wrote:

*For since we have proved all of these things to be the common property of all Christians, no one individual can arise by his own authority and arrogate to himself alone what belongs to all. Lay hold then of this right and exercise it, where there is no one else who has the same rights. But the community rights demand that one, or as many as the community chooses, shall be chosen or approved who, in the name of all with these rights, shall perform these functions publicly. Otherwise, there might be shameful confusion among the people of God, and a kind of Babylon in the church, where everything should be done in order, as the Apostle teaches [1 Cor. 14:40]. For it is one thing to exercise a right publicly; another to use it in time of emergency. Publicly one may not exercise a right without consent of the whole body or of the church.<sup>3</sup>*

### **Read Ephesians 4:11-13**

6. For what purpose(s) does God call pastors and teachers into public ministry?

## ***The Church Defines the Forms that Public Ministry Takes***

7. Underline the “forms” of public ministry that are mentioned in each of the following passages:

*Acts 20:17,28 - <sup>17</sup> From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church....<sup>28</sup> Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*

*Ephesians 4:11 - <sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.*

*1 Corinthians 12:28-29 - <sup>28</sup> And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?*

<sup>2</sup> Kolb, R., Wengert, T. J., & Arand, C. P. (2000). *The Book of Concord : The confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (46). Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

<sup>3</sup> Luther, M. (1999). *Luther's works*, vol. 40 (34).

*Philippians 1:1-2 - <sup>1</sup> Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*1 Timothy 2:7 - <sup>7</sup> And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles.*

8. How do the following passages show that, even within specific roles or offices, duties and responsibilities may vary?

*1 Corinthians 1:14-17 - <sup>14</sup> I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup> so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. <sup>16</sup> (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) <sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*

*1 Timothy 5:17 - <sup>17</sup> The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.*

### **Read Acts 6:1-6**

9. In addition to the specific forms of public ministry the Lord himself established directly, how did other forms of the public ministry develop in the church?

10. How does a church determine which forms of public ministry it will establish?

There is not one divinely-instituted form of public ministry. Rather, as Christians gather to proclaim the Gospel, they are free to define forms of ministry in ways that meet the needs and opportunities of their ministry setting.

### **From This We Believe**

*8. We believe that God has also established the public ministry of the Word (Ephesians 4:11), and it is the will of God that the church, in accordance with good order (1 Corinthians 14:40), call qualified individuals into this public ministry (1 Timothy 3:1-10; 1 Corinthians 9:14). Such individuals minister publicly, that is, not because as individuals they possess the universal priesthood but because they are asked to do this in the name of fellow Christians (Romans 10:15). These individuals are the called servants of Christ and ministers of the gospel. They are not to be lords over God's church (1 Peter*

5:3). We believe that when the church calls individuals into this public ministry, the Lord himself is acting through the church (Acts 20:28). We believe that the church has the freedom to establish various forms within the one ministry of the Word, such as pastors, Christian teachers, and staff ministers. Through its call, the church in Christian liberty designates the place and scope of service.

## **God Calls into Public Ministry through His Church**

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Some who were called to serve God and his people in public ministry were called directly by God (e.g., Moses – Exodus 3:1-10; Isaiah – Isaiah 6:1-8; Apostles – Mark 3:13-19). However, especially in New Testament times, God more often calls public ministers through the Church.

11. Read the passages below and note ways that workers were chosen to serve in public ministry:

*Acts 1:23-26 – <sup>23</sup> So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. <sup>24</sup> Then they prayed, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup> to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.” <sup>26</sup> Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles.*

*Acts 6:3 - <sup>3</sup> Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them.*

*Acts 14:23 - <sup>23</sup> Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

12. What do the following passages tell us about who calls workers into public ministry?

*Acts 20:28 - <sup>28</sup> Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.*

*Jeremiah 3:15 - <sup>15</sup> Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding.*

*Ephesians 4:11 - <sup>11</sup> It was [Christ] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.*

*1 Corinthians 12:28 - <sup>28</sup> And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.*

Luther wrote:

*God calls in two ways, either by means or without means. Today He calls all of us into the ministry of the Word by a mediated call, that is, one that comes through means, namely, through man. But the apostles were called immediately by Christ Himself, as the prophets in the Old Testament had been called by God Himself. Afterwards the apostles called their disciples, as Paul called Timothy, Titus, etc. These men called bishops, as in Titus 1:5 ff.; and the bishops called their successors down to our own time, and so on to the end of the world. This is a mediated calling, since it is done by man. Nevertheless, it is divine.<sup>4</sup>*

13. Scripture does not prescribe the procedure by which Christians must select and call workers into public ministry, although we do consider the examples of the early church (Acts 1:15-26; Acts 6:1-6; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-14). Our basic procedure is as follows:
- 1) A congregation or group of believers recognizes a need. This may be caused by a worker who has left due to death, resignation, retirement, or accepting a call elsewhere; or by a new need or opportunity that arises in a ministry context.
  - 2) That group of believers works together (often with the assistance of a circuit pastor or district president) to determine the scope of the ministry need and create a “profile” of the person who would meet that need (e.g., strengths, age, experience, interests, etc.).
  - 3) The district president (of which there are twelve in our synod) then uses information collected in a database about those who are eligible for public ministry in our synod (based on training, certification, etc.) and discusses the position and potential candidates with other district presidents, the Commission on Lutheran Schools (in the case of teacher or principal calls), and/or the College or Seminary Faculty (in the case of a congregation seeking a new graduate) to assemble a “call list” of those who fit the “profile” given by the calling body.
  - 4) The calling body then discusses each candidate on the call list on the basis of a basic profile of the candidates provided by the district president. After that discussion and prayer, the calling body will vote to select one of the candidates. In most cases, after one candidate receives a majority of the votes, the calling body will make the call unanimous to show undivided support for the called worker whom God has chosen through this process.
  - 5) The called worker will then consider his/her strengths and weaknesses and the ministry opportunities in the ministry context(s) to which he/she is called (including the one in which he/she is currently serving, if applicable) and discuss them with those in both ministry settings, as well as with trusted friends, family, and colleagues in ministry. Then, again after much prayer and careful consideration, he/she will decide in which ministry context his gifts and abilities can best be used to serve God and his kingdom.

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<sup>4</sup> Luther, M. (1999). *Vol. 26: Luther's works, vol. 26 : Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4* (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald & H. T. Lehmann, Ed.). Luther's Works (Ga 1:2). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.

- 6) Note: When the calling body seeks a new graduate to serve, it authorizes the district president to issue the call on its behalf (rather than provide a list of candidates to choose from). In most cases (mainly because they do not already have a call to serve elsewhere), those graduates agree before that call issued to accept whatever call is given to them.

The intent of these procedures is to recognize both that God has given us intelligence and sanctified Christian reason to make decisions and that God himself is the one who gives the church her workers. And we want every called worker and every calling body to have the confidence that God has arranged worker and ministry according to his infinite wisdom and love for the good of his Church. No one would argue that the process is perfect, as it always involves sinful humans, but we trust that God uses it to provide for his Church.

### ***Summary***

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In the past, God called people directly into the public ministry, whether through visions or other supernatural communication or through Jesus Christ himself. And he provided signs and wonders to authenticate their ministry.

While such a direct call is possible still today, we have no reason to expect it. Rather, God calls men and women into public ministry today through the Church. Calling bodies and called workers do well to remember the divine nature of the call into public ministry, as they issue and deliberate calls, and as they serve as or are served by those whom God has called.

For more on this topic of The Divine Call, several essays are available at <http://www.wlsessays.net/subject/c/Call>.

### ***Questions or Comments Regarding Calls Held by Pastor Wagner***

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