

## **To Whomever I Send You, You will Go**

Jeremiah 1:4-10

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, January 31, 2010

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

The Word of the Lord has come to you. Before He formed you in your mother's womb, He knew you. Before you were born, He sanctified you.

You are sanctified. You are holy. Each and every one of you is holy. None of you are excepted. The Lord formed each of you in your mother's womb. Therefore He knew each of you before that. Your mother bore you therefore you were sanctified before that. Since all you came out of your mothers, this applies to all of you. The Lord knows you. He has sanctified you. He has sanctified you for your vocations.

Your vocation is your calling. It is a call that is issued by the Lord Himself. He wants you to do what you are doing. Obviously this does not include sinful occupations. It includes honorable occupations. The Lord calls these, "vocations." He calls them "callings." He has called you.

God sanctifies all of you for your vocations. You have a vocation from God. The catechism outlines the simplest vocations in the section on confession. In regards to the sins that we ought to confess the catechism asks this question, "Which are these?" The answer is, "Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife or worker." It goes on to ask questions about your vocation to elucidate an appropriate confession of the sins that we commit in and against our vocations.

I am not talking about confession of sins this morning. I am talking about vocation and the catechism provides a simple but comprehensive list. The basic vocations to which God calls people is father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife or worker.

God instituted parents. That is why in the commandments, He says, "Honor your father and your mother." Father and mother have supreme authority over their children. They provide for their children. They will guide their children for the rest of their lives. My parents still provide guidance and love even now. When I accepted the call to Immanuel, mother had some advice about how to behave in a new call. They are always mother and father. I knew a seventy year old woman whose ninety year old mother would ask her, "Are you going to work wearing that?" "You know, Mom, I am seventy years old. I think I know how to dress myself."

Parents are this way in part because they don't know how else to be, but in the main it is because God has called them to be so. God has given them all of this authority for our benefit. We are commanded by God Himself to honor them. Therefore what they say is what God wants us to hear. Therefore, dear parents, God has sanctified you as messengers of His Word to your children. The prophets got to announce God's word to the nations. Jesus was the Word in the flesh. Jesus has appointed you as His own spokesman to your children, to tell them about Jesus, to tell them the difference between right and wrong, to tell them that Jesus died to take away their sins, to tell them that Jesus rose from the dead. To tell them that everlasting life is theirs. To tell them that God loves them and that you love them. That is the vocation of parent. God has sanctified you for this purpose. What you do is holy to God.

Do not tell God that you do not know how to speak. Do not tell the Lord that you don't know how to tell you children that what they are doing is wrong when you did it yourself. Many parents neglect to correct their children for certain big sins, because when they were young they committed those

sins themselves. What will I say if my children say to me, "Well, Dad, you did it. How can you stand there and tell me that it is wrong when you did it?"

Are you going to let them repeat the same sins that you committed? You see, dear parents, your sins are forgiven. Are you going to stand on that grace of God or not? Are you going to correct your children because your sins are forgiven or because you were perfect growing up? Are you going to do this thing called parenting from your own righteousness or from His? "Yes, I did that. It was wrong. I know that it was wrong more than other parents who never did it. I don't want you to do it too." And live in that repentance. Your children will get the message. And remember to forgive as God has forgiven you.

The Lord Jesus has touched your mouth. He has made you parents. He has touched your mouth. These are not your words that you speak. They are His words. Do not teach your children your own truth. Teach them His truth. Do not teach your children your own opinions and definitely do not leave them to form their own opinions regarding matters about which God has spoken. Teach them God's word. Teach them the way that they should go. When they are older they will not turn from it.

"Do not say to Me, 'I am a sinner. I cannot speak.' I have appointed you this day a parent to your children." How do you know if you are called to be a parent? Do you have children?

Curiously Luther's catechism does not include in its list the holy vocation of neighbor. In the Ten Commandments that is all that we hear about. We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor. We should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor. We should fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or possessions. We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor's wife, workers or animals. I could go on, but you get the idea. There is a holy vocation to be neighbor.

I have touched your mouth. I have given you my words. You will go to everyone to whom I send you. You will say everything that I give you to say. Do not be afraid of them. I will be there to rescue you.

Some Christians speak about divine appointments. That actually is not a bad way of speaking. The Lord arranges moments in our lives when we get together with others and speak God's word to them. Sometimes it is obvious and spontaneous. Other times we may not realize that we are doing it.

Now let us think about this. Before I was born Jesus knew that I would be pastor at Immanuel saying these words to you in this moment. I sure did not know this. Before you were born Jesus arranged for certain people to be introduced into your life as your neighbors. He has given you His words to say. And He will make sure, if He hasn't already, that you will have an opportunity to say them to someone else. These moments will come. These moments have come.

Do not fear them. Do not fear what they think. Do not worry about what you will say. Say what the Holy Spirit gives you to say. Remember that God has sanctified you for your neighbor. No one else can fulfill the vocation that God gives you.

I remember one layperson who was so concerned that he would get God's word wrong, that when his neighbor asked him about our Father in heaven, he gave his neighbor a theological book that he had read. The theological book was meaningful to him because he had gone to church his own life. It did not mean much to the neighbor.

When your neighbor finally asks you about your Father in heaven or about eternal matters, he or she does not want you to refer them to me or to some other theologian, neither does God. He has appointed you His messenger to this person. Speak the words He has given you to say. Speak only the words that He has given you to say, nothing more and nothing less. If you are concerned about that,

simply read sections of the Bible on a regular basis and pray regularly. If you really want to excel Immanuel provides several Bible classes where the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity, to say nothing of the worship service itself.

But the neighbor has been watching you. He or she has been watching your behavior. They know you. They trust you. They don't know me. They don't know some TV preacher. They don't know some guy who wrote some book. They know you. They trust you. That is why the Lord put you there. He wants to speak through you.

Two ranchers out west had pastures that were next to each other. One believed in Jesus. The other did not. The one who did not was diagnosed with cancer. In small communities like the ones who serve ranchers the whole community knew about it. Fence had to be checked routinely. One day this believer in Jesus drove out to a particular pasture for the day to check his fence. He walked around the outside of his property. It just so happened that his neighbor who had cancer was checking the same fence at the same time. There in the middle of acres of pasture ground, the two men met. The one who believed in our Lord asked the man with cancer how he was doing. The man with cancer spoke at some length about his prognosis. Anyone could tell he was worried. Finally, the believer said to the man with cancer, "Do you want to go to heaven?" And the man with cancer immediately replied, "It sure would be nice." So the believer explained how Jesus had died to take away the man's sins. Because His sins were forgiven Jesus would receive Him in eternity. Jesus rose from the dead as proof of all of this. I don't remember exactly how he said it. And I would have emphasized the resurrection of the dead more or whatever, but the Lord did not sanctify me to talk to this man. He sanctified this laymen to talk to this man. The Lord did not arrange a preacher to see the man in the pasture. The Lord arranged this laymen who had lived as this man's neighbor his whole life. The neighbor knew he was trustworthy and a good man. He knew over the years that he had been to church. He knew that this laymen would have the answers that he needed to face his cancer and death.

Divine appointment some people call it. Divine vocation is what the Lord calls it. He has appointed you neighbor.

I could get into other vocations this morning. God has appointed you sons and daughters, students and workers. God has appointed you husbands and wives. Since God instituted marriage, husband is a holy vocation and wife is a holy vocation. But I think you get the idea.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has placed you into these positions to uproot and tear down, to destroy and to throw down, to build and to plant. In other words, Jesus has placed you into these positions for the sake of His Kingdom.

You tear down. You will tear down. You will tear down the Satan's Kingdom. You will destroy his lies. You will destroy Satan's work. You will throw down anything that he attempts to build. You will tear down the lie that sin is not sin. You will tear down the lies that people say when they call evil good and good evil. You will throw down the notion that everything depends upon your achievement including how you stand in front of God. You will destroy the idea that people have to justify themselves in front of God. You will throw down the notion that there are no everlasting consequences for our actions and thoughts. You will throw down the idea that there are no moral absolutes.

In so doing you will wreck the Devil's Kingdom. The Devil's Kingdom is built upon the notion that you save yourself, that you justify yourself, that you have to earn God's love because you have to earn everything else in this tired broken world.

You will build and you will plant. You will build people into Jesus Christ. You will build His Kingdom. You will do it in the humble ways of ordinary people. You will do it in the sanctified and holy

ways of ordinary people. You will build people up in their faith. You will build them up in the confidence of the forgiveness of their sins. You will build them up on Jesus Christ who has offered His life for their salvation. You will build upon Him who rose from the dead. You will build eternal buildings. You will build eternal life because you build on He who rose from the dead. He who rose from the dead called you to do this building before you were born.

You will plant. You will plant the Word into the hearts of others. You will plant the word into the hearts of your children. You will plant the word into the hearts of your neighbors. You will plant the word into the hearts of those around you, to your spouses, even to your parents. You will plant the word and the word grows all by itself. That is what Jesus Himself says. Isaiah says it also. The word will grow. It cannot help itself.

In fulfillment of the holy vocations that God has given to all of you will destroy and throw down. You will uproot and tear down. You will build and you will plant.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.