

I Corinthians 1 – 7
God's Calling and Our Work
I Cor. 7:17-24

Tonight, I'd like to speak from I Corinthians 7:17-24. I Invite you, as always, to stand for the reading of God's Word, if you would. Apostle Paul, following closely what he said about marriage and divorce, which we studied last week.

¹⁷ Only let each person lead the life^[a] that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. ¹⁸ Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. ¹⁹ For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. ²⁰ Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. ²¹ Were you a bondservant^[b] when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) ²² For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freed man of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. ²³ You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. ²⁴ So, brothers,^[c] in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

Let's pray.

Heavenly father, I ask you to enable us to hear and receive what you're saying to us, to meditate on it and to apply it to our walk of life this day and every day. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.

You may be seated.

So you all know that in 2001 there was a terrible event. The fact that two great full sized planes crashed into the World Trade Center, taking thousands of lives. And you also know that at that time, while thousands of people were streaming out of the buildings, there were hundreds of firemen rushing up the building to try to get people out of the building, which was their task, their service, their job, their calling, knowing full well that many of them would probably die in the process. And then days after that terrible event, there was an outpouring of commentary on the bravery of those emergency workers, firemen and other rescue workers who did indeed risk their lives. And hundreds of them lost their lives while preserving the lives of many others. And there was a sort of a round of statements that said, these are true heroes. You know, we look at athletes and singers and politicians and other groups as heroic people. But this... this is true heroism.

And if you remember, there were interviews, then not only people commenting on the firemen and the rescue workers but also interviews of those rescue workers and firemen who survived. Fortunately, most of them did. And when called heroes, almost every one

of them, or to my knowledge, all of them said, I'm not a hero. I'm just doing my job. I was just doing what I was trained, summoned, called to do, equipped to do.

If you talk to someone who has twins and we have a number of twins in this church, blessed to even have a couple of triplets. If you talk to mothers of twins, they'll talk the same way. If you say to them, you're such a brave woman to raise twins, they may say something like bravery has nothing to do with it. God gave me two twins, two children, and so I'm taking care. Two children. It's my job. It's my calling. Now, that experience shows that someone has a sense that they're in the place that either fate, if they're not believers or society or believers, would say God has placed them in. That's what we read over and over again in verses 17 and 20 and 24.

Now, that experience that I'm in, the place to which God called me is gratifying. It's not felt by all. In fact, probably a few people here at least came because you're not quite sure what you're calling is or you don't like your calling and you're hoping to hear something about that perhaps tonight. It's also true that the church hasn't always helped with this.

So, the Catholic Church for many years, said that the only people are truly called by God are priests, monks, bishops, cardinals. Some Protestants might say, well, pastors and elders and certainly we would say missionaries would be called. Martin Luther challenged all that 500 years ago by saying, no, no, the milkmaid milking her cows, the farmer plowing his fields, shoveling manure. Those are his words, pleases God every bit as much as the priest who was offered the sacraments. He really meant the farmers more pleasing to God because he's not engaged in Catholic foolery.

Now, today, the challenge is different. As you know, there's a man named Abraham Maslow in 1946 wrote an article that both encapsulated and foreshadowed many, many views for years. And he said that once people have food, clothing and shelter and security and love or acceptance, then they begin to look for other things like fulfillment and self-actualization. Someone doesn't have enough to eat, they're focusing on that, but once they have enough to eat, they will seek to improve themselves, to have a better life, to stay mobile, to move forward, and so on.

Now the church, even Protestant churches labor with this. Sometimes you've probably heard from time to time people who say that they feel that they're missing God's calling in their life because they're only involved in business or education or something of that nature, as if that's secondary. And what's really good is to be a full time Christian servant, like being a pastor.

Now, the thing about it is, if you start playing the comparison game, you can always go farther and farther. So, you know, a junior high youth worker is not as noble as a college and careers worker and a senior pastor. You might say, well, that's better than somebody else. But, you know, senior pastors have their insecurities too, in fact, even more than that professors do at seminaries because, you know, they just teach. They don't actually have to get their hands dirty. So everybody knows that a professor is

really a softy compared to a pastor. And I'm mostly professor, you know, so I'm a softy. But pastors sometimes feel like softies compared to missionaries, because you see, missionaries do all the work of a pastor in a foreign language, so they're obviously spiritually superior.

Would you agree with me, Brian? Would you agree with me? Sure. You know you would. I'm not going to call upon you. But now if you're going to start playing that game, you'd have to say that next missionaries who go to Europe where everything is so orderly and prosperous, still is inferior to missionaries who go to dangerous places like India or China. We would agree on that, wouldn't we? And then and then people who work in places where the languages are fiendishly difficult, or people who work in places where there's no electricity, and then eventually the apex of the entire world of all callings is, pioneer Bible translator living in a snake infested tree hut in the Congo where diseases are rampant, and no one can speak his language. Right. Anybody with me on this? Once you start going down that track now, secular people think the same way on many occasions. They rank people like presidents.

For example. So there was a man some years ago who was running for president. And, you know, they make those disclosure statements. And it was revealed that he had made about \$1 million the year before he was running for president and had only given \$600 to charity. And he was from a political party and what's his name? His initials are Al Gore. And, why have you only given \$600 to all charities in a whole year, made \$1 million. And he said, I've given my life to public service. Ouch. Does he think that he's serving the public in a way that farmers don't? I mean, if a politician serves the public and we believe they do, good politicians do, but do we believe they uniquely serve the public? Well, apparently he did think that I would. I would argue that, policemen and farmers and truck drivers and garbage collectors serve the public to anybody agree with me on that? In fact, in fact, if all the politicians, all the lawyers, all the physicians, all the truck drivers and all the garbage men disappeared on the same day, who would witness first, it's an easy question to answer.

So it's unfair. Of course, the fact that you miss one group faster than the other doesn't mean they're more important. But let's just try to remember that every legitimate occupy nation, every honest occupation, everything that doesn't break God's law on serves in some way or other, our neighbors is good. It's good. There's no honest calling that's morally superior to any others.

What's the only thing you can do wrong is not follow the calling that God gave you. That's a different matter. Well, because it's evening church, and because I am professorial at times, I've asked and it'll be popping up on the screen in just a moment. I've asked that we have some questions we could use to make sure that we respect, everybody and that we seek a position that's valid, goes like this.

But there are five questions I want to put to us, and you can put them to other people. If you're a teacher, you can put them to your students. The questions are:

1. Do you honor me by honing the skills that I am speaking? This is now God asks questions. Do you honor me by honing the skills that I gave you? If you're good at something, if you're good at learning languages are going to do something with that. If you're good at math, are you going to do something with that number one?
2. Do you honor the parents, the mentors and friends who invested in you? Because people pour into our lives, people take time aside to evaluate how we're doing, and they give us feedback and they tell us how to do better. We should respect that.
3. If you're an adult, the question would be, do you use your abilities to provide for your family? You know, the Bible says if anyone doesn't provide for their family, they're worse than unbeliever. Are you providing for your family using the skills you have but may not be your favorite skill? You may dream of other things, but you should provide for your family.
4. Do you, in your giftedness, promote the good of your neighbors, of mankind, of this whole world? So I go to a baseball game sometimes in Saint Louis and, people sell things at baseball games. You know, they sell popcorn, they sell hotdogs, they sell cotton candy. I look at these towers of magnificent multicore colored fluff that chiefly promote tooth decay and wonder who could say, I want to give my life to selling cotton candy? This cotton candy do any good for the neighbors, for mankind? Now, I know what some of you're thinking. It's harmless fun. Who pointed you the cotton candy police vehicle. And I accept that you can fill in something else. Let's maybe say telemarketing or something else. You should always ask the question. Are you promoting the good of your neighbors, of mankind, of your family, and more?
5. And finally, do my people God would ask us on the last day and this day, do my people receive answers to their legitimate prayers through you? Give us this day our daily bread? Are you somehow providing daily needs? I was in prison and you visited me. I was sick, etc. that just we just covered social workers and all medical care and so forth. We should answer legitimate prayers of God's people now what that means that is that some work is legal in society, but probably not a job that Christians should do unless they simply must make an income there.

There are tasks that produce almost nothing useful, and if you're in such a task, you should try to change your job as soon as you can. Taking care of your family. Okay, so how do we find our calling? The first thing I want to make sure we do. The first thing I want to say is the quest for your calling. Your place in life is not found by simply asking, can I have an easier life? Every job that has ever existed has had its garbage detail, its tedium. Musicians whom we admire, practice their scales or practice the notes for hours on end. Jerry Seinfeld, who's a very successful comedian, said in one interview, I will spend an hour to shorten a joke by one word. You know, many times you have to rewrite a joke to get one word out of it in the span of an hour. That's tedium. And then you have to memorize it. So that's one side. On the other side, there are people who are looking

for a calling, and they just can't seem to get where they want to go, no matter how legitimate.

It seems like a woman talked to another one just a few days ago --who wants to become a wife and a mother. And although she is godly and good hearted and in my humble opinion, good looking and lively and wise, has never had a date in her whole life. And she's 31 years old. What do you do when you think you're called to be a wife and a mother? In a society that somehow has stopped having a proper interest in things like getting married?

Well, when Christians talk about calling, they usually mean their work, and I've been giving you that impression. But if you study the whole Bible and what it says about calling, actually the vast majority of time the word calling is used as a it's going to describe the call to faith or the call to Christ. For example, the Apostle Paul in this book says we are called to belong to Jesus Christ. The first calls to bond of Christ we are called to be saints. The Bible says we are called according to God's purpose. We are called to fellowship with Christ. And if Christ is called, you were supposed to call on his name and take hold of the calling to eternal life to which you were called. So God calls you and you call him. He says, I've called you and take hold of that call. That's the first and most fundamental call. But clearly, according to this passage, verse 17 and verse 20 and verse 24, all say the same thing. Let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him.

So God calls us to a place in life, not just to. A job. And what that means is that each of us is within God's sovereignty, in a place that he has for us. Now, we're going to qualify that in a couple of minutes. But God calls us to a place in life, maybe temporary, maybe long time. But God calls us to places and we often chafe against this.

So to go back to single adults, single adults often long to be married. The sad truth is that some married people wish they were single again. And I'm not just talking about marriage. If you go to a college, there are presidents who would love to be a professor again, and there are professors. I guarantee you, who'd love to be president. Everybody wants to switch so it seems now.

Paul began with marriage in chapter seven, verse ten and following. If you're here last week he took up the question, what happens if a family, husband and wife, both unbelievers, finds that one spouse converts and the other does not? And the question was, shall I leave this wife or husband of mine? And Paul said, no, don't divorce because you know you should stay married. God called you to marriage. God put you together. Marriage is permanent. But then a little bit later he says you should stay married unless in fact, there's a principle woven to this, this whole book, which I call stay unless. Because. So you might remember the back in the beginning of the chapter, some people said, should I bail from my marriage to a pagan? Paul said, no, stay. What should you do if you're single? Paul said, stay single. There's advantages to being single unless you're burning with passion. Because God has called us to holiness. And

then in chapter seven, verse ten, and follow me says, stay married, stay married, stay in your marriage. Unless the unbeliever resolves to leave because God has called us to peace. That is to say, if your spouse leaves, there's nothing you can do. Somebody deserts you. God has given you peace. Stay unless because stay married. If you're married to an unbeliever, stay married if they're willing. Unless they're bound and determined to leave, stay married because you never know. 3 or 4 verses earlier. You never know husband or wife. If you will save your husband, you never know if they may profess faith in Christ. So stay where you are. Here's why. But if they leave, let them go. Because God's called us to stay. Unless. Because is the principle. Now he applies that in just a moment or two, or in the next few verses, to the situation of someone who's unhappy with their ethnicity or their background.

Let's get a pause for a second.

Who here is unhappy with their background? I don't mean you're thinking about it right now, but you know, if I could choose different parents, I would. It's a thought some people have. Or if I could have been born in another place, or if I weren't the first person from my family to go to college, my life would have been so much easier. Or maybe five generations did go to college and I chose not to go to college. I wish I didn't have to come from a family in which those sorts of issues were at stake. If that's something that's entered your mind at some point, then verses 18 and 19, whether it seems that way or not, or actually describing your life situation, he does it through the question of circumcision and uncircumcision in language. It doesn't necessarily seem all that clear to us. But here's the point circumcision. Uncircumcision means Jew or Gentile. If you're born a Jew in the Roman Empire, it could be construed as a major problem to be Jewish. Paul says, don't let it bother you. Don't try to change anything. Now, some Gentiles who became Christians thought, well, would it be so much better if I could have grown up in the faith, if I could have, had the Word of God taught me from childhood.

And Paul says, no, don't worry about your ethnicity, your background. Ask simply this question are you being God's commandments today? That's what counts, not circumcision or uncircumcision. Paul says, now, to make it clear, we're going to on verse 20 and then 21 and 22, Paul says it again in verse 20, each one should remain in the condition in which he was called.

And now here comes the most difficult social teaching in the entire Bible, I think. And that is, were you bondservant when you were called? Now the word bondservant is almost completely unknown to us today. What kind of a word is that? The word the original word is do loss, which usually means slave. But the translators of the ESV and some other translations, I believe, very wisely said, let's call it bondservant, because slaves in that culture were not what we think of as slaves today.

In that culture, you could earn if you were a slave, you could earn exactly the same income as a free person. You had the same clothes, you'd have the same jobs. You could be actually very wealthy and be a slave. In fact, there were some positions like

city treasurer, in which you had to sell yourself as a slave to the city to hold that very well remunerated position, because then you couldn't run off with the money.

So people sold themselves into slavery, sometimes for the advantages thereof. And you could buy yourself out of slavery by saving your money. So the Bible says, I'm going to use. The translator said, let's use a different word, bondservant. So we don't don't think it's the same as what, we think of in America as slavery. Nonetheless. Nonetheless, it still has a teaching that's very challenging.

Were you a slave? Bondservant when called, don't be concerned about it. Could be translated don't let it bother you. Now that's a that's astonishing. Even if you could save your money for ten years and become free, that's astonishing, because the rules for slaves were in that culture still very harsh. The definitions of a slave include answerable in the body for all offenses, meaning you can beat the slave, can't beat a free man.

You can be the slave answerable in the body for all offenses. That's one. Another one is slaves were called talking tools. Get it? It's demeaning. They were called living possessions. It's like a shovel. Except the shovel talks. They were called property with a soul. Those are very demeaning statements. And yet Jesus, Jesus still says, don't let it bother you.

Don't be concerned about it. Now I quickly add something. Remember I told you stainless? Because if you're if you're a slave, verse 20, remain in your condition. Stay unless you have an opportunity to gain your freedom. And if you do take it, stay unless you can gain your freedom, which case, do so because obviously you're more free to have a family and a life and to serve the Lord.

Go where God might call you. Verse 22. If I can ask for that, he says, why should you stay where you are if you're a slave? The answer is because the one who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is the freed man of the Lord. What he's saying is this if you are enslaved.

And you're a believer, you're free in Christ. Now I want to apply that to everybody from a many of us feel enslaved, metaphorically speaking, in some way or other. You have an illness that is chronic. It's never going to go away. Most likely the rest of your life. You have to treat this illness and it feels enslaving everywhere you go.

You got to calculate, am I going to be okay? Or you may have an extraordinarily difficult family relationship. You think to yourself, I've got to take care of my mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter and uncle cousin. As far as the eye can see, and it feels enslaving to you. So this word is for everybody who feels trapped.

You can also feel trapped in a job. You can feel like a slave to your job, because it gives you enough money to take care of your family. But you're miserable. You're unhappy. You're not doing what you think God made you to do. So this is what he says to everybody in that kind of a situation. If you feel like as if you are a slave or if you feel like a slave, you are free in Christ.

Furthermore, he was free when called. That is to say, a man is not a slave by the way, about a quarter of all the people in the Roman Empire in Corinth at least, were probably slaves. So it's not a tiny group. So if you're a slave, you're free in Christ. If you're free in society, verse 22, please remember you're still a slave of Christ.

Now what he means is everybody is a slave in some ways, and everybody is free in other ways. If you look at it correctly, everyone is free. Everyone is in bondage. Let me just walk you through that for a minute. People often think that a person, a man or woman who owns their own business is really free. You own your own business.

You have no job. Sorry, no boss. Unfortunately do have no job sometimes. But that was a slip of the tongue. I own my own business. Therefore I have no boss. False. Every customer you have is your boss. And if you don't take care of your customers and do what they say, you will have no job. So you're not free.

How about the boss? Well, the boss can tell the administrative assistant what to do. There's no question about that. But the boss is usually under some other boss under maybe next level up in the corporation. That person next level up is under somebody else, a vice president and the vice presidents under the CEO then.

Well, the CEO, he's the one is free. Really. The CEO answers to the board. And as they say, when you're the CEO, there are two job reviews possible. Fantastic. And you're fired. No middle ground. And by the way, the board is answerable to the stockholders. They can be kicked out to. How about let's go to, the academic realm, the student.

Let's make it a high school senior. High school senior says I'm enslaved to my English teacher demanding these horrific essays of me. And would it be great to be the teacher? Well, a teacher has a boss. The teacher has the department chair. The department chair is under the principal and the principal is under the headmaster. The headmaster? He's the one I'm talking to you, Gus. He's the one that's really free. Well, the headmaster has about 800 parents telling him what to do and about 200 teachers and the board. And by the way, the board isn't free either, because everybody's telling their board what they should do. So everybody is under authority. No one is totally free. Everybody's free in some ways in Christ, and everybody's under authority in other ways.

Now, there's a piece of very practical counsel here, and that is if you can gain your freedom, if you're a slave and you gain your freedom, do so. That was very practical advice to Christians in that day. It meant if you're a slave and you have the money to get out of freedom, do it. The slavery is not good.

It's not God's purpose, not God's order. Paul is not endorsing slavery. He's saying, how do you live under this social condition known as slavery? Now he does add one more thing. He says, listen, you were bought with a price. Verse 23, do not become born servants of men. That sounds spiritual, but I think it was actually very concrete advice don't sell yourself into slavery.

What he's saying don't take that job that pays really well and very well honored. That's only open to slaves. Don't do that. So it's an anti slavery comment while still saying, look, we're all under, we're all under bondage. We're all free in some ways. I'll tell you how he makes the point that we're all in bondage in a way.

You know, Paul's a Roman citizen, very educated. Not many people, very small number of people were citizens. But he calls himself a slave of Christ. Moses called himself a slave of God. David called himself a slave of God. And Jesus took the form of a slave. And that relative vices, all the forms of oppression that people have. Now, what this then means is that we should lay aside those thoughts that Maslow promoted of fulfillment and self-actualization, which are largely a myth, as we come to know as time goes by and a myth, probably for elite, educated people from supportive homes with good opportunities.

And I'm not saying, you know, we've been appointed a position by God. I'm not saying that God is indifferent to the idea of our pleasure or interest. If you look at the passages in the Bible to describe service, Romans chapter 12 says, if your gift is teaching, then teach. If you give to service, then serve. So whatever you're whatever you're able to do, do that.

But a little bit later, he says leaders should lead with zeal. That is to say, they should have some passion for it. And those who give should give with cheerfulness. This is a sense in which I hope you hear me. Whatever your job is, you should do your job. Whatever your gifts are, do what your gifts allow you to do.

But there's also a sense in which God takes pleasure in us being happy in what we do, being zealous and cheerful. Ecclesiastes describes this about the joy of labor who labors through the day and comes at the end of the day and eats a good meal, and then rests. God does want us to have joy, but there's more to it than joy.

In America, we're very much addicted to freedom and choice. We want to think the good life is the life I can carve out for myself. I can live the life that I've ordained for myself. And then Christians come along and they say, wait a second, wait a second. there's an internal call, right? You've heard this, right? There's an internal call.

An external call. Pop your hand in the air real quick. If you've heard this language as a Christian internal external call. Good. So that's a check on the idea. So our society says do what you want to do, follow your passion, etc.. Then some people say, oh no, don't follow your dream because following your dream usually ends up in a low paying job, playing the banjo on street corners because you're not good enough to be hired by anybody to do it.

So don't follow your dream. Get a get a job that pays well. job that gives you comfort. That's what secular people say. Christian. Say no, no, no, that's not the way you look at it. You ask, what has God enabled you to do? And looking within you think that's what I

should do? And then the check on that or the, the guardrail for that is but somebody else has to agree with you.

There has to be an external call, somebody saying yes, you want to be an architect. Yes. I can see that you should be an architect. The only problem with that, and a man named John Frame, whom I quote from time to time, a wonderful reformed theologian, is that that duo internal external leaves got out of it. Did you hear me talk about God?

What you want, what other people want? And so here's another one up on the screen for you. How do you know if you have found the right approach or the right mentality? Well, number one, we should start with God, who gives gifts to humanity. What gifts has he given you? That's question one. What are you good at? What do you pick up quickly?

What do people say? Wow, you're good at that. Thank you. Number two, the spirit enables us to discern our gifts, fallibility through self-examination and the confirm of others. That is, we can make pretty good guesses, especially when we pray. But we're not always right. Some people think they want to be the lead singer, and actually they were perfectly designed to be the backup singer.

It's fallible, but you pray and the spirit guides you. Number three God in his sovereign, he gives you opportunities to develop and exercise your gifts. Something comes your way. Somebody asks you to do something so they see something in you and they say, would you like to try this? That's God's sovereignty behind that. Number four, God gives wisdom.

So we use our gifts to glorify him and to love our neighbor, which means then we should ask ourselves questions like this. Do I have a God given ability that meets a human need?

Do I have the capacity, the training set up to meet that need? Do my skills remedy a deficit that I see in this world? Now? Those are the easier questions. Another question is what people will I serve? Where will I serve? Because geography counts. Even musicians that tour 300 days a year, they have a home base, they have an office.

And finally, what burden will I bear? Because usually we talk about our calling. We're thinking much more about self-expression. But a calling is often to carry a load, to solve a problem that you are in a better position to solve than maybe anybody else. Now, in all of this, I want to ask that we realize that most of us are, not necessarily the front and center here of the story.

That is to say, if you look at the credits of an album, they don't really have them anymore. Since Spotify has killed anything being purchased by anybody. But, you know, there's the band, they're five people, and you look and you see that there are 74 people that supported the band. And if you look at a movie, you know, here's the actors and then there's a list that goes on for pages and pages of all the key grip and Gaffey grip and so forth.

All those people, we don't know what they do or why most of us are actually background people. And it's okay. And I want to tell you a story that I hope you like about this is a man named Jason Lezak. Anybody here heard of Jason Lezak. Jason Lee? Anybody here heard of Michael Phelps? You've heard of him? That's because he's won 22 Olympic medals. And I believe 14 of them are gold. And he won eight in the 2008 Olympics. And everybody knew he was aiming for eight. And everybody knew that he'd probably get seven individual and one team. But the one that was the hardest to get was the four by 100 meter freestyle, which was the American's worst race. That is to say, the French team had the number one swimmer in the world, Alain Bernard, and the fastest time in the world for several years. And Bernard said things like, we will smash the Americans. Well, then there was the race. And perhaps, you know about the race. There was a first leg and it was more or less even. And then second leg Phelps, not the strongest in that distance. and then another person came along, and then Lezak took the fourth leg because he was the fastest and he was known as a relay swimmer, and he dove into the pool with a 0.6 second deficit. If you know about swimming, that's actually quite a big deficit. And the first 50m, Leszek is swimming and Bernard is swimming, and it goes up to a full second and more than a body length. It's hard to make that up. And Lezak was thinking to himself, he said later, I find this amazing that in the most famous swimming event of all time, Lezak was thinking, it's the Olympics. You can't give up. So in the greatest race of all time, the man who did well, I'll just say, was thinking about quitting, and he talked himself out of it and said, I'll keep swimming. And he relaxed and he began to catch up just a little bit. And Bernard and saw him coming, looked over his shoulder, and then he made a mistake. He began to drift out of his proper space. And then Lezak was able to draft, which you can even do in the water and catch up a little more. And Bernard got a little bit tighter. And, you know, the scene where Phelps is out of the pool screaming. Lezak, onward. And they touched it seemed simultaneously. But Lezak won by one, one hundredths of a second in the fastest 100 meter race of all time. Leszek by himself never won a gold medal. He won one bronze. He was the guy that could do his best when he was on a relay team. And I suggest to you that that's really most of us, that the calling we have is not necessarily what we think about. It's somehow working with others, which means that as you look at the calling you have and we all have many callings, the role we probably have is playing on a team, serving on a team.

The truth matters. If you're thinking about your calling in life, you probably have a bunch of callings. You may say, I didn't need to come to this sermon. I'm 74 years old. I don't have any callings. I'm not looking -- my career is over. If you're 74 years old, you probably have a calling as a husband or wife. That's a calling as a mother. Father, if you have children, you probably do, quite possibly as a grandmother, a grandfather. That's a calling too -- as a neighbor, as a volunteer in your church and in your neighborhood all have many callings. An 18 year old can think, a 20 year old can think, what's my calling? I'm just a student. No, you're a student that you're calling. You also probably have a part time job, and people are probably depending on you. And you two are probably called to be a roommate and called to be maybe just a player on an intramural soccer team. But

if the team needs you, they need you. And that's a calling too. We all have any number of callings. It's part of God's plan, part of God's purpose. He puts you in these places. He wants you to thrive in them. Not constantly ask the question, what's next? Where am I going, but live where God has called you the place to which God has assigned you in his goodness, in his kindness, and of his love for you. First of all, yes, of course, always shown first of all in Christ, but also shown in the life he gives you.

Now, I'm going to pray in a moment, but what I want to do today is ask you just to pray and ask the question of yourself. Have I recognized all my colleagues, or have I missed some? Do I think my life, and callings are over? I realized God still has a variety of callings for me. And what might those be? And can I be more content and more thankful in them?

So you pray then I'll close in a moment.

Lord, we admit that our places often seem mundane to us and that we don't see them as your call, or your plan, or your assignment. We admit that we're prone, most of us to be restless, to look for something better somehow. So Lord, give us the graces that we need to persevere where we are. To accept the roles you have. To see the roles you have. Now. Give thanks for your goodness, for your plan, for your sovereign purposes in our life. And as we do so, we ask that you receive us as we give you the praise and we pray in Jesus name, Amen.