

The Calling of Christ

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Ephesians 4:1-6

Numerous times throughout my life I've heard the rule that you should not wear white sneakers in Europe because people will instantly know you're American. My response is always why I should care if people know I'm American. I am American. Why would I want to hide it?

In our text this morning Paul speaks about not hiding who we are. You are of Christ. You are those who are called. Don't hide who you are. Walk worthy of your calling.

Ephesians 4:1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,

Paul doubles down on the use of the word "calling" in our text. Walk worthy of the calling by which you were called. To appreciate why we must remember that the Greek word for church is ekklesia, those who are called. Paul is using a word they would have used regularly. It is time to go to ekklesia. We worship at the ekklesia. Paul reminds them since they consider themselves to be "the called" therefore walk as "the called."

Our own word "church," comes from the German kirche, which probably derives from the Greek kuriakē, which is the possessive form of Kurios, meaning of the Lord. Our word church therefore emphasizes that we are no longer of the world but are instead "of Christ."

Both ideas, "you have been called out," and "you are of Christ," are very prominent in our text this morning. As one who has been called out of the world and is now of Christ, show that in your life. Don't try to hide your white sneakers.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,

This transformation takes place as we heard in our gospel reading through Christ who is the bread of life. Just as healthy eating and exercise can transform a person's body, so also partaking in the bread of life can transform your soul.

The Amish love this passage, but they seem to completely disregard the last four words. They believe that they can be transformed by not being a part of the world. However, Paul is quite clear this transformation comes through the "renewing of your mind," not through the abstaining of the body.

In our gospel reading Jesus reminds us that this renewal of mind comes through the heavenly manner, which is his word.

David reminds us "**blessed is the man whose sin is forgiven.**" This renewal comes from daily receiving the forgiveness of sins.

We are transformed not when abstain from the things of this world, but when we are renewed by the power of Christ's forgiveness.

In our text Paul begins with the fact of this transformation. You are the called. You are of Christ. This is who you are. This is not something that you need earn, but it is yours because Jesus died for your sins. Paul begins thus with the objective fact of our salvation, and urges us therefore not to hide it, but to live worthy of it.

Ephesians 4:2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,

“Bearing with one another.”

Through this phrase the Holy Spirit reminds us that the church while it is on this earth, what we often call the church militant, is a group of weak, foolish, sinful people who are nevertheless of Christ and called by Christ. It is not a group of some who are weak and sinful, but rather it is a group among whom all are weak and sinful. Yet despite our weakness and sinfulness we are a part of the UNA SANCTUM, the church, the body of Christ. We are one in Christ because Christ died for our sins, not because we so perfect. Therefore, Paul reminds us because we are all weak and sinful, but we are also all one in Christ, therefore bear with one another in our weakness and sinfulness.

In this way we imitate Christ and show that we are of Christ. Christ doesn't ask us to bear the burden of the cross, that is to literally nail ourselves to the cross. He doesn't ask us to hide in caves. He doesn't ask us to shun modern convinces and technology. The only burden he asks us to bear is the burden of love. To bear with one another, to readily, easily and freely forgive as we have been forgiven.

1 John 3:23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

When Paul calls this "enduring" or "bearing" it sounds like an onerous task. It sounds like a thing which we must do even though we don't want to. It sounds onerous and a burden only because of our sinful nature.

Paul calls it a burden because he is speaking to our sinful nature which does not want to "bear with one another." Our sinful nature prefers to get revenge and prove that they were wrong, and I was right.

In reality it is not a burden at all. Forgiveness and love do not make our lives harder but easier. Hatred and resentment are things which weigh us down. A forgiving attitude is like a well-sealed piece of wood. The water just runs right off. Those who will not forgive are like raw wood, that has not been sealed or painted, the water soaks in and slowly rots from inside, with anger and resentment.

Proverbs 17:9 Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends. (NLT)

Christ has forgiven all our sins by his death on the cross. What a wonderful and joyful thing that is to be thus forgiven. Now we can live in even more joy by forgiving others as Christ forgave us, or we can allow ourselves to rot from the inside out by dwelling on the faults of others and allowing that anger to thrive in us.

Ephesians 4:3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The peace which we have through Christ Jesus is the thing that binds us together. We are not united in our favorite food or our jobs or favorite sports team. We are united in the peace of God. Paul encourages us not to take that bond lightly but rather to eagerly preserve that peace.

Sometimes people purposely park their cars in between two parking spots, taking up both. Really annoying but they do it out of a fervent desire to keep their car pristine. God wants us to have that same eagerness, zeal in the keeping / preserving are unity.

The only way this is possible is through constant and daily confession and forgiveness.

Sometimes we see a couple who have a long and happy marriage. From the outside it is easy to assume, well their spouse is really a good spouse. The difference is not that their marriages are free of the pettiness and difficulties that the rest of us have. The difference is that they are willing to forgive and let things go.

Jesus tells us:

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

A peacemaker is not someone who interferes with others, but someone who in their own dealings is quick to forgive and prefers to personally suffer humiliation rather than humiliate the other.

As the Holy Spirit reminds us here in this passage we are bound together by the peace of God. That peace that comes from knowing our sins are forgiven through Jesus, that is the thing that binds us together. Because we are thus bound together, we should be eager to preserve that peace.

Ephesians 4:4-6 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

In these four verses Paul reminds us of the many valuable gifts we have from God. We are one body. We have one Lord. We are all of the same baptism.

We are all one body. You do not harm your own body. If your hands should be angry with your feet and harm them, the hands and even the whole body suffers. So too when we seek to hurt and get back at one another, when we live in hatred, we all are harmed.

One Spirit who works in all of us. It is the same Spirit who gives gifts to one as to another. Why do you think that you are better or greater than another when it is the same spirit at work in us all.

We have one Lord. This same Lord died for me and my brother. If I confess that Jesus had to die for my sins, then why should I hold the sins of another against them.

We are all of one baptism. My sins are washed away in baptism, so are my brothers. Why should I cling to their sins if we were both washed in the same baptism?

All these things are ours. We do not strive to attain them. We already have them. Christ strove to attain them for us. Our possessing these things is not dependent on living a perfect life. Because we have them in Christ therefore, we seek to live lie we are Christians.

We are of Christ. We are called out of this world. We are of the baptism, and of the spirit and of His forgiveness. We are those who are united and one family. These are gifts from God, having received the calling of Christ walk in the calling of Christ. Amen.