

CALLING

Some thoughts and a reflection from Dr Sam Richards, Head of Children's and Youth Work for the United Reformed Church

Matthew 5:13-15

This is my go-to passage for reconnecting with the heart of our calling as followers of Jesus.

Jesus declares that we ARE the salt of the earth, the light of the world – not that we have to try to turn ourselves into these things.

The Spirit of God is already at work in the world, and God's glory covers the earth as the waters cover the sea. Our calling is to taste and see this and enable others to do so too.

We can fine-tune our spiritual taste buds and de-distort our spiritual vision so that we can 'taste and see that the Lord is good' – and then share that experience of living in a world soaked in the wonder-filled presence of God.

Jesus also tells us where and how to do this – God has already placed us on 'the lampstand' – somewhere that can give light to an environment. All we have to do is shine - where we are!

Jesus is not abolishing the law but fulfilling it. Elsewhere he sums up the whole law as loving God with all our heart, mind and strength, and loving our neighbour as ourselves. So we taste and see more clearly as we grow in love – love for God and love for others.

So embrace your inner child, wonder again at the God-flavours and God-colours you encounter in your daily life and invite others into this love-soaked life.

REFLECTION

(Called - relationship)

You are CALLED - let that sink in

You are called - that presupposes a caller -

you are Called BY GOD - inviting summons

You are called - basis of your relationship with God

Many different types of 'call':

To Speak to attract attention - call out

To Summon - call here

To Elicit - call from

to Visit - call on

To Commission - call to

to Describe or regard as - call as

to Decide - call it

God calls - we respond - the foundation of calling is relational

(Called to BE - creation)

First and foremost you are call to BE

Everything and everyone is summoned into existence - God calls - and it is - God speaks you into being

We are called and named - our identity lies here

God made you and named you - calls you by name and calls out, names, confers and confirms who you are - your strengths, skills, gifts, desires, hopes - who you are called to be

You are called to image God in your own unique and beautiful way

(Called to BELONG - salvation)

Secondly, you are called to BELONG - to belong to God in Christ

Called with others to become the people of God - the church, the loving community

There is the External call - hearing good news announced

And the Internal call - God stirring your heart to respond

We share the call to belong together to God in Christ now and always

You are called to be part of one body / a living building / God's family

Your call is a welcome into your place in this living, loving whole where you belong

(Called to BECOME - sanctification)

Thirdly, you are called to BECOME

'come, follow me' - Jesus' calls us to become followers of the Way

Take up your cross - be joined with Christ's death and resurrection

Follow through the dark times and light, the dry times and well-watered, the despair and joy

Called to become holy through the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit

And called become fruitful - become like Jesus with the fruit of Christ-like character - called to grow in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control

(Called to SERVE - vocation)

Finally, as one already called to be, belong and become, you are called to serve

Invited to be God's co-worker -

serving God in the world out of love for God and the world

Creation Mandate - as God's steward

Great Commission - as Christ's ambassador

Called to be God's fellow worker to share in

- creative and sustaining work
- redemptive and restoring work

God gives everyone:

- Gifts and talents
- Relationships and roles
- Passions and desires
- Contexts and opportunities

It is through these we often discover our call

(CALLED - relationship)

You are called by love - to love

Called as God's beloved - to love God and to love neighbour

Listen afresh for God's call - sometimes we see it emerging as we look back, sometimes we see it beckoning us forwards

Take a moment to reflect now in God's presence on your ministry with children: where is it:

- creating -
- sustaining - nurturing, enabling flourishing
- redeeming - forgiveness, transformation, enabling change, new start
- restoring - renewing, rebuilding, healing

Take a moment to connect with your:

- Gifts and talents - how do others describe you, encourage you, what do they thank you for?
- Relationships and roles - who are you connected to? What roles do you play in other people's lives (formal and informal)?
- Passions and dream - what do you love? What are your hopes? What drives you?
- Contexts and opportunities - where are you placed? What needs or gaps beckon to you? What are you being asked to step into?

All of these are God-given - all of these help shape your call and help you discern your call

God is calling - to explore and express your call - it is your call

"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Frederick Buechner

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