

CALLED TO LIFE

SERIES: KINGDOM WORK



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Genesis 1-3,

Colossians 3

2nd Message

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Genesis 1-3, Colossians 3

We've all had the burning bush moment, right? That moment where God speaks to you and tells you exactly what to do. You're thinking about what to do with your life: what school to attend, what major to pick, what job to take, what city to live in, etc., and God shows up and spells out exactly where he's calling you to and what he's calling you to do there.

Some of you are scratching your head. That's probably because these burning bush moments don't often happen. Sometimes we wish they did, but most of the time they don't. Even in Scripture, there are only a handful of people who get a direct call on their life to a specific place or purpose.

Noah was called to build the ark. Moses was called through the burning bush. Prophets such as Samuel and Jeremiah were called. Saul on the road to Damascus had a dramatic calling. Few people from the Scriptures received specific calls to a particular work. It's rare in the Bible, and I believe it's rare today. But still, we want a clear answer to the question, "God what are you calling me to do?" "What is your calling on my life?"

Today, my hope is that we'll find that calling is much less about these rare burning bush moments and more about faithful daily living.

I want to first talk about some universal callings that we all have. This a bit of review and bit of foundational work for the story we'll look at a little later this morning.

Called to Christ

Our first and greatest calling is to the Lord. The call to know and belong to Christ is greater and deeper than any workplace or vocational calling. The call is to be restored to God, to people, and the world around us.

In Colossians 3, a chapter of Scripture we will undoubtedly visit a few times throughout this series, we are called "God's chosen ones" in verse 12. By God's

willful choice he calls each one of us to him through Christ This includes all of our being and doing. We are reminded that the call to a specific kind of work is secondary to the call to God.

In addition to that call of redemption, we are also called to participate in the redemptive work of Christ. We are all called to Christ *and* to participate in his work

Colossians 3:12-14:

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

We are told to "Put on... compassionate hearts and kindness, humility, meekness, and patience." We are told to "bear with one another" and forgive each other. We are to love people because God loved you.

When we who are called to Christ put on these attributes and choose to love, we take Christ's redemptive work, which starts in our hearts, out into the world—to our workplaces, schools, homes. Everywhere we go, we should strive to display Christ.

Called to Work

My next point is a bit of review, but I since we have our youth here this morning, I want to remind them that you can't be a professional stay-at-home son or daughter forever. Though some of you hold that position now, it's a temporary job, and eventually, you will have to work.

As Paul Taylor taught us last week, we were created to be workers.

In Genesis God created a garden that needed to be worked and then created workers in Adam and Eve. I believe that created purpose and command to work is an integral part of our being. We were created to work. Each one of us is called to work to the degree that we are able. Discerning the particular type of work you are called to may be difficult, but there is no doubt to the fact that we are made to and called to work.

Many of us here in the Silicon Valley get this, and some of us probably get this too well. Working 10-, 12-hour work days; working in the car, when you get home, when you're on vacation, etc. We get that we are made to work and working hard is good, but our jobs can't be our lives. Though we are called to work, we are also called to a full life.

Called to life, not just work

As believers, we are called to life---a new life with Christ that extends beyond paid work or jobs. God not only has a call on your life for your vocational or paid work but also your everyday life.

Some of us have a tendency to let our jobs dominate our life or become our life. Sometimes this seems unavoidable such as during finals week or before the deadline of a new product or software.

It's good for us to check our rhythms and remind ourselves that our job is only one aspect of our life, and God's calling for our lives extends beyond a call to a paid work or job.

God may lead you to a job, but the more significant work he calls you to may be unpaid work, such as raising children, caring for a loved one, mentoring, or foster care. Maybe your paid work is what helps you meet your need for money, but your passion and fulfillment come from outside.

I have known many people in this category, where work is something that provides for needs, but serving in a ministry or a cause seems to be a more important work God is leading you to.

Even if God leads you to a particular profession, there need to be boundaries to protect God's other callings for your life because he calls us to a whole life, not just to work.

With this understanding, I want to look at one man's vocational journey.

The story of Joseph in Genesis is one that we are probably familiar with. We are going to pick up his story in Egypt, so here is a quick background on Joseph.

Joseph was the second youngest son of Jacob. He was loved by his father above his brothers. Joseph was given a special robe by his father, so his older brothers were jealous of him.

Joseph began to have dreams. He dreamt the sun, moon, and stars bowed down to him, which was interpreted as his whole family bowing down to him as if they were under his authority. This probably is not a story you want to tell when you're one of the youngest and smallest and weakest brothers. His dream, as you could imagine, did not make his family happy, especially his older brothers.

One day when Joseph was sent to meet his brothers, they devised a scheme. They would throw him into an empty pit; then they would have lunch, and then they would leave him in the pit to die. However, as they were eating lunch near the pit, they saw a group of Ishmaelites. One of the brothers, Judah, says, "Maybe we shouldn't kill Joseph. He is our flesh and blood after all." So, instead of leaving him in the pit to die, they resolve to sell him to the Ishmaelites as a slave.

We pick up Joseph's story in Genesis 39.

Genesis 39:1-6:

Now Joseph had been brought down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, had bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 2 The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man, and he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 3 His master saw that the Lord was with him and that the Lord caused all that he did to succeed in his hands. 4 So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. 5 From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. 6 So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge, and because of him he had no concern about anything but the food he ate.

Joseph is sold into slavery and becomes a servant in the home of a man named Potiphar. We might expect that he would have a bad attitude, a poor spirit, and not work hard because he is wrongfully placed in this position. But that's not the attitude he has. Joseph works hard. He works with integrity and works with the Lord in mind.

Joseph earns the trust of the Potiphar, the owner of the home, who places him in charge of his estate. Joseph shows us a good example of someone who trusts God and makes the best of a less than ideal situation.

Joseph understood that his work served as a testimony to God. Undoubtedly he would rather have been at home, but he resolved to make the best of his circumstances, and God blessed him and made himself know through them.

However, even though Joseph was working hard and doing all the right things, injustice still came his way. He is wrongly accused by Potiphar's wife of trying to coerce her, and he is thrown into prison.

Genesis 39:20-23:

And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. 21 But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. 22 And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 23 The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.

Joseph is dealt another unfavorable hand: he is in prison for a crime he did not commit. These circumstances were out of his hands. Joseph did not have a trial to plead his innocence, and he did not have control over where he was being sent. The only thing he could control was what he did when he got there. And it seems as though the same work ethic and integrity that Joseph had in Potiphar's house earned him favor in prison. Like Potiphar had done, the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all of the prisoners. Joseph, as we've seen, is trustworthy, a gifted manager, and does not let his circumstances tarnish his character, work ethic, or faith.

We can't always control our circumstances, and we certainly can't control results, but we can control our attitude, integrity, and work ethic.

Some of you may be in jobs or seasons of life where you don't like what you are doing. Maybe you can't wait to be finished with school, or you can't wait for a project to be over. Today as believers in the Bay Area, whether in the workforce or at school or in any place we are given a task, we have the opportunity, like Joseph, to display our faith even in the most difficult of circumstances. Every work has an audience. Our calling is to display Christ in every work.

Let's continue following Joseph.

Genesis 40:1-8:

Some time after this, the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker committed an offense against their lord the king of Egypt. And Pharaoh was angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 3 and he put them in custody in the house of the captain of the guard, in the prison where Joseph was confined. 4 The captain of the guard appointed Joseph to be with them, and he attended them. They continued for some time in custody.

5 And one night they both dreamed—the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison—each his own dream, and each dream with its own interpretation. 6 When Joseph came to them in the morning, he saw that they were troubled. 7 So he asked Pharaoh's officers who were with him in custody in his master's house, "Why are your faces downcast today?" 8 They said to him, "We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them." And Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Please tell them to me."

Two important officials were thrown in prison for offending the Pharaoh, and each had a troubling dream. Joseph was blessed with a special ability to interpret dreams. This ability is something unique that gains him some recognition.

There are two things I want to point out about this ability to interpret dreams. The first is that it was highly regarded. This was a desirable skill because dreams played an important role in Egyptian culture. Dreams were thought to determine the future. They were thought to be prophetic. This skill was especially important to leadership in regards to policy making and decision making. Joseph, with his ability to interpret dreams, had a highly desirable skill.

Secondly, Joseph makes sure to acknowledge God and give him credit for it before he begins to use this ability. Joseph recognized God as the source of his abilities, strengths, and gifts.

Many of us are here in the bay area because we have desirable skills and gifts. Managers of teams or projects, engineers, scholars, athletes, entrepreneurs, etc. These all take gifts and skills that you've undoubtedly had to work for and seek training for and go to school for, but God is still the source of our abilities and gifts. Joseph understood this and acknowledged God.

How often do we give thanks and recognition to God for the gifts and abilities he has given us? And how can they be used to elevate Christ's redemptive work in our life?

In Joseph's story, the cupbearer for whom Joseph interpreted a dream was restored to his prominent position and was supposed to remember Joseph to help him receive justice. The cupbearer, however, forgot him and Joseph spends two more years in prison until the Pharaoh has dreams that no one can interpret.

None of the Pharaoh's advisers or dream experts can provide an interpretation for the two dreams. The cupbearer, after two years, remembers Joseph in prison, and Joseph is called on to interpret the dreams. Joseph interprets the dream regarding a famine coming over the land in seven years, and gives recommendations on how the Pharaoh should proceed

Here is the Pharaoh's response:

Genesis 41:37-42:

This proposal pleased Pharaoh and all his servants. 38 And Pharaoh said to his servants, "Can we find a man like this, in whom is the Spirit of God?" 39 Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discerning and wise as

you are. 40 You shall be over my house, and all my people shall order themselves as you command. Only as regards the throne will I be greater than you." 41 And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt." 42 Then Pharaoh took his signet ring from his hand and put it on Joseph's hand, and clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain about his neck.

Joseph's attitude, skills, and wisdom impressed Pharaoh and led him to believe that Joseph was the man for the job. But ultimately it was Joseph's faith in God that even though he didn't understand how, why, or when, God was still working out his calling for his life. Joseph couldn't control his circumstances. All he could control was what he did with them.

Three weeks ago I took my nephew to see my brother. This is a picture from that day. You might be wondering why my brother is wearing that shirt. That's because my brother is an inmate at San Quentin State Prison, and has been for the past five years.

Unlike Joseph, my brother is there for decisions he has made and the consequences of those decisions. Similar to Joseph, he has little control over his circumstances, only how he handles them.

Since my brother has been incarcerated, he has come to know the Lord, started college, and is training to become a machinist. At my last visit with him, two people approached me. The first was a pastor in the prison and he said, "You know your brother is there every Sunday." The second person was a prison official. He put his arm around my brother and asked: "Has your brother told you about all the good things he's doing in here?"

Can I say for certain that my brother was called to this particular set of circumstances? No. What I can say is that my brother is called to Christ and is called to take his redemptive work wherever he goes.

I think it's the same for us.

Colossians 3:15-17:

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,

**with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
17 And whatever you do, in word or deed,
do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God the Father through him.**

We are called to life, so let's live it with the peace of Christ in our hearts, his word dwelling richly in us, and the mark of his name on everything we do.