



OUR PRECIOUS CALLING

Grace Communion International

Minister: Eric Vautour

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6th Sunday after Easter

**SCRIPTURE
READING:**

**JOHN 15:9-17
(ESV)**

**“9 ¶ AS THE FATHER HAS LOVED ME,
SO HAVE I LOVED YOU. ABIDE IN MY
LOVE. 10 IF YOU KEEP MY
COMMANDMENTS, YOU WILL ABIDE IN
MY LOVE, JUST AS I HAVE KEPT MY
FATHER’S COMMANDMENTS AND ABIDE
IN HIS LOVE. 11 THESE THINGS I HAVE
SPOKEN TO YOU, THAT MY JOY MAY BE
IN YOU, AND THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE
FULL. 12 “THIS IS MY COMMANDMENT,
THAT YOU LOVE ONE ANOTHER AS I
HAVE LOVED YOU.**

13 GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS, THAT SOMEONE LAYS DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS. 14 YOU ARE MY FRIENDS IF YOU DO WHAT I COMMAND YOU. 15 NO LONGER DO I CALL YOU SERVANTS, FOR THE SERVANT DOES NOT KNOW WHAT HIS MASTER IS DOING; BUT I HAVE CALLED YOU FRIENDS, FOR ALL THAT I HAVE HEARD FROM MY FATHER I HAVE MADE KNOWN TO YOU.

16 YOU DID NOT CHOOSE ME, BUT I CHOSE YOU AND APPOINTED YOU THAT YOU SHOULD GO AND BEAR FRUIT AND THAT YOUR FRUIT SHOULD ABIDE, SO THAT WHATEVER YOU ASK THE FATHER IN MY NAME, HE MAY GIVE IT TO YOU. 17 THESE THINGS I COMMAND YOU, SO THAT YOU WILL LOVE ONE ANOTHER.” (JOH 15:9-17 ESV)

THESE ARE THE LIVING WORDS OF GOD

**THANK YOU FOR HAVING REVEALED
YOURSELF TO YOUR CHURCH, YOUR
CHOSEN ONES AT THIS TIME.**

AMEN

OUR NEW RELIGION
BY ARTHUR GUITERMAN (1871-1943)

- **FIRST DENTISTRY WAS PAINLESS,
THEN BICYCLES WERE
CHAINLESS,
CARRIAGES WERE HORSELESS,
AND MANY LAWS ENFORCELESS.**
- **NEXT COOKERY WAS FIRELESS,
TELEGRAPHY WAS WIRELESS,
CIGARS WERE NICOTINELESS,
AND COFFEE CAFFEINELESS.**
- **SOON ORANGES WERE SEEDLESS,
THE PUTTING GREEN WAS
WEEDLESS,
THE COLLEGE BOY WAS
HATLESS,
THE PROPER DIET FATLESS.**
- **NEW MOTOR ROADS ARE
DUSTLESS,
THE LATEST STEEL IS RUSTLESS,
OUR TENNIS COURTS ARE
SODLESS,
OUR NEW RELIGION — GODLESS.**

OUR PRECIOUS CALLING

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This is a very insightful view of modern society's progress, isn't it?

All human religions rely on the self.

Christianity is very different because the centre of reference is Jesus Christ, sent to the earth by God the Father and revealed to us by the Holy Spirit.

Jesus teaches many things in this short passage of Scripture. During today's sermon, I would like to focus on one which is so easily forgotten. The following is what Jesus said to the apostles and the apostles repeated it to the church later on.

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.” (Joh 15:16 ESV)

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1Pe 2:9 ESV)

Jesus is the chosen one representing all of humanity. After Jesus' baptism, this is what God the Father said about Jesus. **“And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!’” (Lu 9:35 ESV)**

As we saw in last week's sermon, Jesus is the new Israel. He is the founder and the originator of a brand-new nation in himself.

Having come down from heaven and incarnated in our flesh, he became the perfect human being representing all of us. He is God's Chosen One, being the perfect man who lived in our flesh.

Jesus redefined humanity in himself. He did many things for us, too many to list them. I would just like to highlight a few.

He was baptized when he did not need to be baptized because he was sinless. Being fully God and fully human in his one person, In his baptism, he represented all of us.

He lived the perfect life for all of us. Jesus came to the earth to do the Father's will. He did this out of love for his Father, willingly. He willingly died for us while we were

still his enemies.

He died and was resurrected for all of us.

“14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; 15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.” (2Co 5:14-15 ESV)

Very clear is in it what God has done for all of humanity. He died and was raised for our sake.

Jesus has become humanity or man as man was created to be. In the biblical sense, “man” is a term for both man and woman (Genesis). **“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,” (1Ti 2:5 ESV).** Being God and being man in his one person, being our Creator, he redefined humanity. Because of what Jesus did, humanity’s sin is not counted against us. This is what God the Father did as we read in 2 Corinthians. **(“that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” [2Co 5:19 ESV]**

Our calling originates in God and in God alone. We have not done anything to merit this calling. We were all guilty as sin. Not one of us deserved to have eternal life. Not one of us deserved to be in relationship with God. The only way that we could have eternal life is for this life to be given to us.

Maybe a comparison we could use is that the earth is completely dependent on the sun to have light. We have day and we have night because the earth in a miraculous

way rotates on itself and receives light from the sun. The earth cannot produce light. In the same way, we cannot produce life apart from receive it from God.

The Bible tells us that repentance is a gift of God. The Bible also tells us that we cannot come to Jesus Christ unless the Father draws us. Although the world is reconciled to God the Father in Jesus Christ, not everyone is called at this time.

As we read in 1 Peter 2:9, the apostle Peter was not talking to the whole world. He was talking to the called out ones in that generation. He was writing to the church. Reading the first and second epistles of Peter, he refers to the calling and election of God's people 7 times.

For example, 1Pe 1:15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct,
1Pe 5:10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. etc

There was nothing special about those people being called and there is nothing special about us being called at this time except for God's grace.

Again, we must always remember the fact that God, in the person of his Son is the centre of who we are as Christians. Without Christ, there would be no Christianity.

Jesus stands at our door and knocks. To the church in Laodecea, Jesus said the following, "**18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. 21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.**" [Re 3:18–22 ESV]

We always have a choice to accept whether we accept his calling or not.

"14 'Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 ¶ And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and

my house, we will serve the LORD.' [Jos 24:14–15 ESV].

Joshua was encouraging people to make the choice to serve God, to choose God. They were faced with trusting in God or in trusting the gods of the land.

Before God opens our minds, we are all lost. We are all in need of forgiveness for our sins. We need to be acquitted from the sentence of death that hung over our heads.

Our goodness and our good works and our religion will never save us. Salvation exists in no one else than in Jesus Christ our Lord.

David gives a good description of God's mercy and our pitiable state in Ps. 103 (next slide)

“2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, 3 who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, 4 who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,”
(Ps 103:2-4 ESV)

OUR PRECIOUS CALLING

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David was given to understand that every day he was dependent on God’s mercy. Every day, the blood of Jesus Christ, the blood of mercy and forgiveness applies to us.

Our calling is not purposeless. We have been called to serve Jesus Christ. Having accepted his mercy, his grace, his sacrifice on our behalf, we live to serve him. Every day, we are in a very intimate relationship with him as he lives in us and we live in him.

His calling of us at the special time is for a very special purpose. We are called to bear fruit and as second Peter 2:9 tells us, we are called to declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

The apostle Peter goes on to say that one time we had not received his mercy but now we have received his mercy (paraphrase of verse 10).

We are only able to bear fruit if we stand on the very foundation of Jesus Christ and obey his commandments.

As we read and learn about his commandments, we need to understand that all his

commandments are good, merciful and just because all his commands stem and originate in God who is love. This is why we are not to see God's commandments as burdensome. Obeying God, obeying Jesus shows that we love him.

Let's think about some of God's commandments and see how loving they are because they originate in him. As we think about these things, we need to realize that the world does not have the same standards. We cannot impose these standards on society. We can teach and point people to Jesus Christ.

Imposing these commandments would not work. There has to be a willingness to obey and that willingness comes from repentance and turning to God. God needs to change the human heart. And He does and He will. This is the promise of the New Covenant.

Let us take the commandments of honouring your father and mother. This is revealed in the fifth commandment in Exodus 20 and repeated in the New Testament. It comes from God and we see it lived out in Jesus Christ. Jesus honours his heavenly Father. When he was on the earth, he also honoured his earthly parents, Mary his biological mother and Joseph his stepfather.

Exodus also tells us not to commit murder. Again this is expounded in the teaching of Jesus in the sermon on the Mount and elsewhere in the New Testament. God values life. Man is created in God's image, although that image is distorted by sin at this time. In God's eyes, life is precious. Life is a gift of God. We are not free to decide when it ends. Society has a different approach but in God's church, we are to live in obedience to Jesus Christ. Society permits euthanasia or assisted suicide. In God's church, we are to live by God's words rather than by the standards of this world. Life belongs to God. He gives it and he is the only one who can take it. These are complex issues that we cannot go into in details today. The point is that we are not to take things in our own hands. In whatever we do as disciples of Jesus, we are to value life because he does.

If we take the example of abortions, society has a different value system than God has. When we take things into our hands, we suffer consequences.

For example, in New Brunswick alone, the official statistics say that from 1970 to 2007 New Brunswick officially had 21,154 abortions. When we stop and think about it, those are a lot of lives and a lot of families that will never be, as a result of this practice. These are the lives of children that could not be born because their lives were taken early for whatever reason.

United to Christ, we are to have different values. We are to see life whether in the

womb or out of the womb as precious and valued by God. I realize that we will not change society but we can certainly be an example as a church by living in obedience commandments. His commandments are rooted in love because they originate in God..

(above stat taken from <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/policy/abortion/canada/ab-canada-NB.html>)

The same principles apply to “you shall not commit adultery”, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. All these commandments are magnified in the New Testament.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour originates from the fact that God is truth and he cannot lie.

God is a faithful God. Marriage between a husband and wife is a reflection of the relationship between Jesus and the church. God is faithful. As his children, in love, we are to be faithful to one another in marriage.

Again, as we see in the early church, the church was not out to impose God’s way on society to obey God. Instead, the church pointed people to Jesus Christ and Jesus through the Holy Spirit transformed people’s heart and he still does.

That is why God tells us in the Old Testament: **“He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness (steadfast love), and to walk humbly with your God?” (Mic 6:8 ESV)**

We are to realize that the world has not come to this understanding yet. As God permits and calls, he wants us to participate in what he is doing by being witnesses and by being actively involved in making disciples by baptizing them in the name of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are to teach them to observe all that God has commanded us.

We live in a very polite, politically correct society. We are sometimes afraid of upsetting people. We are called to stand up for Jesus, teach others how good he is, how good God is and as a church, we are to teach. Teach what?

We are to point people to the Who, to Jesus the head of the church. And we are to teach people how to live in him.

These activities will result in bearing fruits and declaring his excellencies. We can tell people the difference he has made in our life by calling us out of darkness, out of

death into a new life. In other words, we are not to be afraid to tell our story of how God has changed our lives.

We are privileged that he has given us a new hope. We are not be shy or afraid of sharing our story.

I hope that this helps us to appreciate the very special status we have been given by called at this time in His church to participate in the wonderful work he is presently doing in His church and in the world as he calls more sons and daughters to himself!

Jesus calls his disciples friends. In him, we are to love one another as we are loved! Because we are loved and respond to his calling, He hears our prayers. What a privilege!

Let us never forget. Let us appreciate His special calling!

Let us pray!