

**Sonoraville Baptist Church**  
**Sunday, July 17, 2011 – 11:00 AM**  
**Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor**

**Series: Every Christian a Minister**  
**The Call to Minister – Matthew 4:18-22**

**Introduction:** Several years ago, in London, England the city officials received a lot of complaints about their mass transit system. The main problem was that people were complaining about how the city's buses drove right past the bus stops even though people were standing in line waiting to be picked up.

When the London Transit Authorities responded to the complaints, they issued the following statement which has become infamous with public relations departments everywhere. It read:

*"It is impossible for us to maintain our schedules if we are always having to stop and pick up passengers."*

What was wrong with that statement? They got their priorities confused. They thought their job was to keep a schedule, when in reality, their job was to pick up passengers and deliver them to their destinations. Because they got their priorities confused, they failed to do that for which they were created.

We talked last week about finding our place in God's Purpose. So, following that same thought, what did God have in mind when He saved you? **Ephesians 2:10 (NIV)** tells us that when we were saved we were *"...God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works that He prepared in advance for us to do."* In other words, God has something in mind for you to do when He saved you. He saved you to do *"good works"* He'd prepared ahead of time. His purpose for us as Christians was to serve Him by doing good works. But what *"good works"* He saved you to do?

Some people believe that God's purpose in their lives is for them to come and fill a pew every Sunday morning. That is certainly a good thing to do isn't it? Don't you feel better when you come to church and get uplifted by the music? Don't you feel good when you take part in worship and hear a good spiritual message? Isn't it great to have fellowship with God's people at church? Sure it is! Attending church is a good thing and most people are satisfied in doing that. But they have no intention of doing anything more. They see their coming to church as all God saved them to do. That reminds me of a poem I once read:

Once upon a pew I sat and heard the preacher ask,  
*"We need someone to teach a class, now who will take this task?"*  
Then God sat down beside me there and said, *"Son, that's for you."*  
*"But, Lord, (said I) to stand before a class is one thing I can't do.*  
*Now Bill would be the man to call, there's nothing he won't do.*  
*I'd rather hear the lesson taught from here upon my pew."*  
Once upon a pew I sat and heard the preacher ask,  
*"We need someone to lead the songs, Now who will take this task?"*  
Then God sat down beside me there and said, *"Son, that's for you."*  
*"But Lord, (said I) to sing before a crowd is one thing I can't do.*  
*Now brother King will do the job, there's nothing he won't do.*  
*I'd rather hear the music played from here upon my pew."*  
Once upon a pew I sat and heard the preacher ask,  
*"I need someone to keep the door, now who will take this task?"*  
Then God sat down beside me there and said, *"Son, that's for you."*  
But I said: *"Saying things to strangers, Lord, is one thing I can't do.*  
*Now Tom can talk to people, Lord, there's nothing he won't do.*  
*I'd rather someone come to me and greet me on the pew."*  
As years just seemed to pass me by, I heard that voice no more.  
Until one night I closed my eyes and woke on heaven's shore.  
*'Twas four of us together there to face eternity.*  
And God said, *"I need just three of you to do a job for me."*  
*"O Lord," I cried, "I'll do the job, there's nothing I won't do."*  
But Jesus said, *"I'm sorry, Friend, in Heaven there is no pew."*

You see, it's possible for us to confuse our priorities. As Christians, we have things to do, and if we don't do them they may not get done.

Now just like the schedule was important to the Transit authority in London, going to church is important for us. But that's not our main priority. Our main priority should be serving God. But sadly, too many people don't see it that way. Too many people in the church are quick to throw out objections and excuses as to why they can't serve God.

## 1. Our Objections to Serving God

Tonight, our Nominating Committee will be getting together, and in the next few weeks, they'll be going out among the membership looking for people to fill positions of service within the church for the next church year. I've had the privilege of serving on many Nominating Committees, so when I ask you to serve on one, I'm not asking you to do anything I haven't done.

Once, I was approached by a lady who told me, "*Now before you go signing my husband up for anything – you be sure to talk to me first.*" Knowing this man, I knew why the lady would want to tell me that. I knew this man was a person who loved to serve the Lord, but I also knew he was a busy man. So I knew that his wife wasn't objecting to his being involved in the church... she just wanted him to be careful and not burn himself out.

We don't want to burn anybody out. We don't want to have a few people "*doing everything in the church.*" But, ideally, we'd like to see everyone doing "*something*" in the church.

Have you ever used this excuse? "*I'm too busy with other things to serve*" or "*I don't have time to serve?*" "*Why don't you find someone else?*" Now let's think about this for a minute. First, who isn't busy? I mean, do you believe that you're the only one who is busy and everyone else is just sitting around twiddling their thumbs? If we say, "*Find someone else,*" we're saying, go find someone who's not busy. Go find someone who has the time. Well, would you please show me someone who fits that description?

Fact is, we're all busy. We may be busy doing different things, but we're all involved with things that occupy our time. So being busy or not having the time is not a good excuse.

Second, my Bible reveals to me that God never went to the lazy or to the idle when He needed people to serve Him. When He had work to be done He went to those who are already at work. When God wanted a servant, He called the busy person. He called:

- \* Moses when he was busy tending his flock at Horeb.
- \* Gideon when he was busy threshing wheat.
- \* David when he was busy caring for his father's sheep.
- \* Elisha when he was busy plowing the fields.
- \* Nehemiah when he was busy serving the King as his cupbearer.
- \* James, John, Peter and Andrew when they were busy fishing & mending their nets in their father's fishing business.

Now, why would God pick on "*busy*" people? Because – when you need work done, you need to find someone who knows how to work. You need to find someone who has shown they can be responsible.

When I was in Rome, some of my members used to talk about their granddads having to go down to the cotton block on occasion to get help to work on their farms. The cotton block was where people used to hang out to find jobs. But they'd say, my granddaddy always hated to go down there to find help. When I'd ask why, they said: "*Granddaddy said there was a reason those people were hanging out down there. Most of them were lazy and nobody really wanted to hire them. They didn't know how to work.*"

They said the best workers were the kids of other farmers. Those kids grew up working. They knew how to be responsible.

God is looking for responsible workers. That's why Jesus said in **Luke 16:10 (NIV)**: "*Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.*"

## 2. God's Pattern of Calling Servants.

The first thing we need to be aware of concerning God's pattern of calling servants is:

**A. God Does the Calling.** In **John 15:16 (NIV)** Jesus said, "*You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.*"

In our text for today, we see Jesus issuing this call. **Matthew 4:18-22 (NIV)** says, "*As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a*

net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."

Notice that it was Jesus who did the calling. He was the one who took the initiative. Peter did not decide to call himself. James and John were not sitting in their boat waiting for Jesus to come by so they could join up with Him. When Jesus calls us to service in His kingdom, we are not the initiators – He is.

Secondly, we need to understand that in God's pattern of calling servants:

**B. God Looks for Our Availability.** After God calls a person to salvation, His pattern is look for ways people can serve Him. He's looking for people who will be obedient and available to give responsibilities to. Then He observes how people handle those responsibilities, and if the person is found faithful and demonstrates abilities, He gives more and more responsibility.

Let's go back to our text for today. If this were the only passage you read in the Bible about this encounter, you'd think that this was the first time Jesus had ever met Peter, Andrew, James and John. But John 1:35-42 tells us that when John the Baptist baptized Jesus, two of his disciples heard John say about Jesus, "*Behold, the Lamb of God!*" One of these two disciples of John was Andrew and after Jesus was baptized by John, he asked Jesus where He was going, and Jesus invited both of John's disciples to where He was staying and they spent the rest of the day with Him.

Andrew, then went to find his brother, Simon and he told tell him, "*We have found the Messiah*" and he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "*You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas*" (which, when translated, is Peter)."

You see – Jesus didn't just pick 12 men out of a crowd and suddenly sign them up as His disciples. The pattern of Jesus' calling was gradual. He met them. He got to know them. He prayed with them and He prayed over them. He called them. Then He worked closely with them for 3 years, giving them assignments and responsibilities. And each assignment was a little more involved until, after Jesus was resurrected and ascended, at Pentecost, Jesus allowed these followers to take the lead and take care of His most precious possession – the Church

That's how God works. As someone has said: "*God doesn't look at your ability as much as He looks for your availability.*" And if you're available, God can and will do some amazing things through you.

Finally, we need to understand that in God's pattern of calling servants:

**C. God Has a Place for You.** In John 3:29-30, we find a vivid analogy by John the Baptist that teaches us an important lesson in finding our place in God's kingdom. In **John 3:29-30 (NIV)** John the Baptist is describing his relationship with Jesus and he says, "*The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.*"

This analogy might sound a little strange to us, but to the Jewish reader, it would be very clear. Let me see if I can make it clear to us. John the Baptist called Jesus the bridegroom and himself the friend of the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom had a unique place at a Jewish wedding. He would serve as a liaison between the bride and the bridegroom. He would arrange the wedding, send out the invitations, and would preside at the wedding feast.

On the wedding night, the friend would bring the bride and bridegroom together. His duty was to guard the bridal chamber and not allow any false lover in. He would only open the door when in the dark, he would hear and recognize the bridegroom's voice. Then, he'd gladly let him in, and then go on his way rejoicing in the fact that he'd completed his task of making sure the bride and bridegroom were together.

The friend of the bridegroom did not begrudge the bride or the bridegroom. He knew his only task had been to make sure the bride and the bridegroom were together, then he'd willingly and gladly fade out of the picture. He was content with his place.

This analogy from John the Baptist teaches us about the importance of our place in the kingdom of God. Our place is to bring people to Christ. And just as the role of the friend of the bridegroom was critical to a Jewish wedding, so is our role in God's kingdom. We have been given the role of introducing to a lost world the person of Jesus Christ. That is how and where we find our place. It's not about us. We are not the center of attention, but we point people to the One who is.

**Conclusion:** Our task is clearly defined. Our place and purpose is found in pointing people to Christ, and our mission is urgent. We live in a day when not only are there fewer people attending church, but out of the Millennial generation – those born between 1980 and 2000, only about 15% are Christian. Couple that with the fact that baptisms are down all across the Southern Baptist Convention, and you have a dire situation that is getting worse. However, this also means that the door of evangelistic opportunity is wide open as more and more people are lost and in need of hearing the gospel. May we open our eyes and catch a vision of a world that is becoming increasingly lost. May we not become too comfortable in our pews. May we not become complacent with the message of the Gospel. And may we never become content with our progress of becoming more like Christ.

We can only fulfill God's goal for our lives, as we begin to serve Jesus. So the question this morning is: Am I available to serve Him now? What am I available to do? How can I fulfill my place as the friend of the bridegroom and point people to Christ?

You never know what you can do for God, until you are willing to be used by Him. If you'll just give yourself to Him in the small things, He will do some great and even unexpected things in your life. **Prayer**