

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9  
Date: January 16, 2011  
Service: 2 Epiphany  
Place: St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Palatka, FL  
The Rev. Canon James M. Dorn III, Rector

*“God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

However, in our relationship with God's Son, Jesus Christ, are we faithful?

Do we stand fast in our love and service to our Lord Jesus Christ?

Do we keep our baptismal and confirmation promises?

And are our lives so filled with faith in Jesus Christ that others see Him in our words and our actions?

After today's worship services, we will be having another parish planning meeting about our faithfulness to God, who is always faithful to us. This meeting, like the previous one, is not about past successes or failures. Instead, we will refine our focus and our desire to move into the future as a fellowship, a community, of Christ filled brothers and sisters who love Jesus and seek His strength for the ministries waiting to be grasped in order to bring Christ's light into someone's dark life.

When Paul wrote, “you were called,” he is telling us God saw something special in us and He called us into a fellowship with Jesus Christ and other Christians. However, God's call is only the beginning of a Christ filled life and our being together is right now and in the future.

Being together in Christ, for Christ, for an eternal future with Jesus Christ is our response to God's call. We are not called to focus on money, although the church needs money to accomplish its mission. Instead, our calling from Jesus Christ is, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Till the end of time, God is faithful and yet we are not faithful in fulfilling our promises to God. Many times our unfaithfulness to the promises we made is because we are lazy or stingy with our time and talents. However, the other times we are unfaithful to Christ's call is because we feel unprepared, ill-equipped, or unworthy to do Jesus' work in the world. When we think that way, we become frozen in place and do not live into our full potential as Jesus' followers and so we just stay put and slide little by little back into the world of death and decay that Jesus saved us from till we know longer know the faithfulness and blessings of God.

To have a bright future and to counteract the world's effects, God gave each and everyone of us at least one spiritual gift to be strengthened and used during our lives. A gift we are not to hold onto or keep wrapped up but a gift we are to unwrap and faithfully share with others so the Church will win the war the devil has waged against God and the souls of His children.

In this war, Bishops and priests must never forget that the portion of Jesus' flock we have care over are never 'just laity' and likewise the children of God must never see themselves as 'just a parishioner.' A

real world example echoing through time happened when General Eisenhower admonished one of his Generals for referring to a soldier as 'just a Private'. This is the memorable part of Eisenhower's scolding, "If this war is won. It will be won by the Privates and not by the Generals."

The Church will win souls for eternal life in Jesus Christ the same way, by the devotion and hard work of the Church's Privates, the common, ordinary Christians like you who may have only one talent to give. And, the difference you can make with your gift in your community will last longer and be more effective than the gifts of the most dynamic preacher or the wealthy parishioner who gave a pittance of their wealth to finance something great; because the ordinary person comes to know Jesus loves them from someone just like them. After all isn't that why God became one of us, so we could be released from our sins and our bondage to ourselves?

Remember, recognized saints are simply ordinary Christian saints like you who let the Holy Spirit empower them to cast away their fears and pride so they could use their spiritual gift. And if you are feeling hopeless and doubt the power of Christ in you, open a hymnal and read Hymn 665, 'All my hope on God is founded,' and your hope will be strengthened and you will be reminded of God's faithfulness to those he calls and to those who follow.

All my hope on God is founded; he doth still my trust renew,  
me through change and chance he guideth, only good and only true.  
God unknown, he alone calls my heart to be his own.

Mortal pride and earthly glory, sword and crown betray our trust;  
what with care and toil we buildeth, tower and temple fall to dust.  
But God's power, hour by hour, is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness e'er endureth, deep his wisdom, passing thought:  
splendor, light and life attend him, beauty springeth out of naught.  
Evermore from his store newborn worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty Giver bounteous gifts on us bestow;  
his desire our soul delighteth, pleasure leads us where we go.  
Love doth stand at his hand; joy doth wait on his command.

Still from earth to God eternal sacrifice of praise be done,  
high above all praises praising for the gift of Christ, his Son.  
Christ doth call one and all: ye who follow shall not fall.<sup>1</sup>

If Jesus' work is to be done from St. Mark's Church in Palatka, Florida, the Bishop, and your Rector will not be able to do all the work, you must use your spiritual gift if you and the Church are going to love others in the power of the Spirit, be a witness to Jesus' love, and be filled with peace and joy. Yes, it is up to you, the plain, run of the mill, everyday Christian, to make this Body of Christ come alive and bring a new and revived Spirit of Christ to your soul, the soul of this congregation, and the community you touch every day. Without your faithfulness to your call the church will fail; however, with Christ and in Christ, you and the church will not fail and everyone will know God is faithful

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1 *The Hymnal 1982*, words: Robert Seymour Bridges (1844-1930), alt., after Joachim Neander (1650-1680).

because you are faithful.