

Many of us, especially as the years go by, know something about the difference between what we wish we could do & what we are actually able to do. We remember bodies that were stronger, schedules that were fuller, energy that seemed to replenish itself overnight. We may still feel the desire to do more — more for our families, more for our church, more for the world — while finding that our bodies or circumstances set limits we are only beginning to catch up to in our hearts. We feel grief in that. And often a sense of guilt, wondering whether we are somehow letting God down, or whether our usefulness is slipping away along with our strength.

For those recently retired, there may be questions about purpose & rhythm: Who am I, now that my days look different?

For those still working, there may be fatigue, anxiety, or the sense of running just to keep up. For many, there is the added weight of caring for others while quietly managing one's own limitations.

Into all of this, Paul speaks a steady, gentle word: God is faithful. God has already given you grace. God has already called you into fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Notice what Paul does not say. He does not thank God for how productive the Corinthians are. He does not praise them for their stamina, their efficiency, or their accomplishments. In fact, if we read on, we learn that

they are struggling in all kinds of ways. And yet Paul says that they have been enriched in Christ, that they are not lacking in any spiritual gift, & that God will strengthen them to the end. Their worth, their calling, their future — none of these rests on how much they can do.

That same truth extends to us today. Our culture is so obsessed with youthfulness, or at least the appearance of it, & we are constantly being told that value comes from activity, independence, & output. And here is where the gospel meets us, telling us something very different: before we can lift a finger, our lives are held & sustained by grace. God does not withdraw love or calling as our bodies change. God does not measure faithfulness by endurance or speed. God remains faithful, even when our capacity feels reduced.

This is where the Gospel reading quietly echoes the same theme. In John's Gospel, John the Baptist stands with his disciples & points — not to himself, not to his own ministry — but to Jesus. "Here is the Lamb of God," he says. And then, when his disciples begin to follow Jesus, John lets them go.

John's vocation, in that moment, changes from calling people to turn to God, to pointing to God with us in Christ, bearing witness, proclaiming, "Look—there he is!" And then John steps back, trusting that Jesus will take it from there.

For many of us, especially in later seasons of life, vocation may look less like doing & more like being. Less like leading from the front & more like quietly pointing toward Christ through presence, prayer, & faithfulness in small things. These are not lesser callings. They are deeply Christian, rooted in the faith that God comes to us when we know how to wait, when we trust that God is at work even when the work is not visible. The church needs the wisdom of lives that have known both strength & limitation, joy & loss.

Paul reminds the Corinthians that God will strengthen the faithful “to the end.” That does not mean we will always feel strong. It means that we are always held. It means that even when our hands cannot do what they once did, we are still held by Christ. Even when our days feel quieter or smaller, they are still punctuated by God’s grace.

So today, hear this good news: you are already enough. You are already called. You are already loved. Christ meets you exactly where you are, not where you wish you were. Whether your days are full of activity or marked by stillness, whether you are beginning something new or learning how to let go, God remains faithful. Our greatest strength — what carries us through everything — is living in light of God’s faithfulness. May we all be blessed with this awareness, now & always. Amen.