

**Called and Transformed:
January 25, 2026**

Romans 8:28 [1 Good]

We know that all things work together for good
For those who love God,
Who are called according to his purpose.

But that doesn't mean...
Life is always good or easy.
It means... when we believe in Christ...
We have the opportunity...
To proclaim the goodness of God...
Every single day.
It's what disciples do.

We are called... to live like...
God's love has changed our lives...
And our hearts.
For good.

Here's my story.

Driving to work on Thursday January 8th 2026... **[2 Gas Gauge]**
My gas tank was pretty empty...
The idiot light turned orange...
The estimated mileage range...
Was 40-something...
So I was ok.
I had enough gas to get to Parker. Probably.

So like any reasonable human being...
I checked with the GasBuddy app...
To see where the best gas price was...
Because there is no sense... in paying too much.

Turned out to be Costco.
Which was good news.
I liked going to Costco for gas... especially early in the morning.

It was 8 am...
Filled the tank to the top...
And drove to work.

Then later... early in the evening...
After working all day...
I went out to start my car.
Pushed the ignition button...
And it started...

For a couple seconds...
Then it sputtered and died.

Repeatedly.
Every time.
Every single time.
Something was wrong.
With my Jeep machine.

Next thing I knew... a tow truck came.
And dropped my poor Jeep off...
At Parker 4x4... just down the road.
They were excellent.
And told me....
You need to call Costco... asap.

Now... somewhere between the tow truck...
And the repair shop...
I learned... I had a serious case... **[3 Bad Gas]**
Of bad gas. Diesel gas... in my unleaded vehicle... to be specific.

I called Costco.
And was ready...
Itching for a fight.
Loaded for bear.
I wanted to let them know...
I was very very disappointed.

But the truth is...
The person who answered the phone... and helped me...
Was completely... lovely.
She told me the truth about the gas problem.
She laid out the next steps.
What I needed to do.
How to proceed.
Which helped me...
Because I didn't know what to do.

She emailed me a form.
And reassured me.
That all would be well. She really did.
It's going to be ok.

And told me... that Costco would take...
Full responsibility...
For what happened.
And they have.

Its two weeks later.
I received a check on Friday... for the full amount.
And all was well.

So you know... really..
There was nothing...
To be mad about.

I wanted to be mad.
But I wasn't.
It was inconvenient.
Unexpected.

But... not intentional.
Debilitating.
Or life-threatening.

I'm still here.
The Jeep is out... in the parking lot.
Costco is back to selling clean gas again.
All is well with the universe...

It was not personal.
It wasn't really about me.
It was something that happened...
That presented an opportunity...
For me to respond.

It was not good.
But it gave me the opportunity...
To see the good.
To be the good.
The choice was mine. Right?

Just an ordinary guy...
Faced with a choice...
And how I reacted...
Said more about me... and my identity...
Then it did about the situation.

So listen... **[4 Fishermen]**
In the gospel lesson...
Jesus called fisherman...
To be his disciples.

He knew what he was doing.
His intention was...
To completely change their lives.

He said... I know you have spent your entire life...
Getting in your boat.
Casting out your nets.
Catching fish.
Cleaning fish.
Selling the meat.
Cleaning the nets.
Mending nets.
Packing the nets away.
And then... doing it all over again.
Day after day after day.

It's the one thing you know.

Then Jesus.
Messed everything up.

He intervened in the ordinary lives...
Of these fisherman...
And called them...
To be something new.

This was unexpected.
Inconvenient. Uncertain.
And downright scary.

They had a pattern.
They had a life.
They had careers.

And Jesus invited them to...
A complete transformation of their lives.

From now on... you will follow me.
From now on... YOU will do what God has called ME to do.

AND from now on... you will be a part...
Of something bigger...
More important.
More powerful.
Than what you did... in your old life.

AND it will be...
For the sake of the world.
Not just for you.

God's work.
Through you.
For the world.

In other words.
I need you to help me...
But it's not about you.

They were called. **[5 Called]**
And when we Lutherans talk about call...
Especially call to ministry...
There is a golden glow...
Around the word. CALLED... waaaahhhh...

But I would propose to you...
Being called is no big deal.

Let me rephrase that.
Being called is not extraordinary.
It's not unique. It's not special.
It's a common occurrence.
For us. For the followers of Jesus.

The disciples weren't special.
They were ordinary men.
They were fishermen.
They were stinky.
They were hard working.
They probably used colorful language.
They were just normal people.

So are we.
And that's exactly who Jesus calls...
To serve God... and to fulfill his work. Us.

Anyone who has a relationship with Christ...
Anyone who has been baptized...
Receives the Holy Spirit... and...
Is called to do some kind of work...
For the sake of HIS mission...
In the world.

Disciples aren't special...
They're just like you and me.

No one out there...
Has a greater call than you...
Our calls are ALL essential...
For the well being of God's mission.

It is our job... all of us...
To point to the Kingdom of God.
To proclaim the love of God through Christ.
To show what it means...
To have a life... that has been...
TRANSFORMED.

To give hope.
To a hurting and broken world.
It's you and me. We are called.

And it's strange... right?
To think that the God of the whole universe...
Has called us...
To do his work.

It makes us ask...
Why me?
But a better question to ask...
Is why not you?

The day I was ordained... **[6 Ordained]**

Back in 1993...

My family was gathered... to celebrate...

At the church... then later in someone's home.

And I can't remember exactly what happened...

But my sister Lynn... swore.

Which was not an uncommon event.

I don't remember what word she said...

But she knows them all.

And by the way... so do I.

When she swore in front of me.

She immediately... looked at me... mortified.

She covered her mouth...

And said... I'm so sorry.

And it made me laugh.

I said... Lynn... I know who you are.

And you know who I am.

I've heard it all before.

And nothing is different.

Now that I'm ordained.

You're still my sister... I'm still your brother...

And I love you.

BUT honestly... something was different.

Not that I needed her to pretend...

To be someone that she is not...

In order to maintain the illusion...

Of holiness.

No. That hadn't changed.

What changed was... my purpose.

I was going into the ministry...

Word and Sacrament... full time...

That was a big change for me.

It changed what I did...

But it didn't change... my heart.

My love of God...

Had not changed.

My love for my family.

Had not changed.

My desire to serve God.

Had not changed.

Just the way my purpose...

Was going to be completed in the world.

Just to be clear... **[7 Called to Love and Serve]**

I had been called... to love and serve God...
Long before I was ordained.

And so have you.
You have been called... through your faith...
To love and serve God...
In this world.

Ordained or not.
You are essential to God's mission.
It's who you are.

Which leads me to... the second lesson... the epistle from Paul...
Talking about the conflict in Corinth.

So in the church in Corinth.
People were trying to stand out.
And establish their dominance... their importance...
And their authority...
Within the church.

So they started pointing back...
To the people who baptized them.

I belong to Paul.
I belong to Apollo.
I belong to Cephas.
I belong to Christ.

As though you are distinct...
And more important because of...
The person... who baptized you...
This makes no sense. Because...

They had forgotten...
That they were ordinary people...
Who were called to serve and love God.

Or how Paul writes it:
We all are God's servants, working together.

They didn't need to be important...
In order to be important to God.
And in order to have work to do.
But they forgot to ask... to ask the most basic question... who am I?

Remember in Alice in Wonderland... **[VIDEO - Alice]. [8 Who?]**
The Caterpillar asked her...
A very important question.
He asked... Who are you?

And she couldn't give a good answer.
She was confused about her identity...

Well... that's us sometimes.

Sometimes we answer that question...
By describing what we do.
We are fishermen.
I am a plumber.
I am a music teacher.
I am a homemaker... and a caregiver.
I am a financial advisor.
I am a pastor.

Sometimes we answer...
By describing our family...
I am a father.
I am a mother.
A child.
A grandchild.
An aunt or an uncle.
A sibling.

Sometimes we answer...
By telling people where we live.
I'm an Iowan.
I'm a Coloradan.
I'm both at the same time.

Sometimes we describe ourselves...
By telling people what activities we do.
I'm a hiker.
I'm volunteer.
I'm a dancer.
A singer.
A hard worker.

But above all those claims...
We make about ourselves...
About who we think we are...

There is one claim and one name...
That far exceeds all the rest.

You have been called by Jesus.
To do God's work.

You are a child of God Almighty.
That is your baseline identity.

You are a source of life and hope and light and love...
In a hurting and broken world.

That's who you are... above all else. **[9 Transformed]**
You are called... by Jesus...
To be transformed... by the renewing of your mind.

We are challenged by God...
To think differently...
About who we are...

We are called to incorporate this TRANSFORMED identity...
Into every aspect of our life.

Our call... affects everything about us.
Our work.
Our relationships.
What we do.
How we live.
The choices we make.

We have received from Jesus...
An irresistible... undeniable call...
Which is an opportunity for us...
To live a new life... of hope...
To love not just in words... but in action...
To live out... what we say we believe.

The call... changes us.
Changes our hearts and minds.
And gives us a peace and strength...
Beyond ourselves.

Then the call drives us outward...
To change the world...
Around us.

So. Today hear the invitation...
That Jesus made to simple fishermen...
And that Jesus now makes to you.
Follow me.
And be changed...

Let the Holy Spirit move powerfully in you.
Let your mind be transformed by the love of Christ.
And let yourself... live out your faith...
Like it makes all the difference...
In the world...

Because... it does.

Thanks be to God.
Amen!