

Sermon/homily notes

Education Sunday 2010

CALLED TO SERVE

These outlines for a sermon or homily suggest two ways in which the lectionary readings can help us explore the theme of vocation. The article on Vocation that is available on the Education Sunday website provides useful background reading. Chapter 4 in *Supporting Christians in Education* is a particularly helpful read in preparing the first sermon. [add link to information about where to get it]

Your sermon will be enhanced by showing one of the film clips from the Education Sunday website to illustrate your talk, if you have the equipment available. A DVD version is available free of charge on the *Transforming Lives* Toolkit for churches. Email transforminglives@stapleford-centre.org to request a copy.

Theme one – Discovering your vocation

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Luke 4:14-30

Small children often get asked ‘what do you want to be when you grow up?’ Many of us are still pondering that question even as adults! I wonder how many of us wish we could have the same experience as Jeremiah – a clear calling from God to a strategic role in the work of his kingdom? Jeremiah’s call was unusual, but there is a lot we can learn from it.

- Jeremiah discovered his vocation when he was young (Jer 1:5-6). God has given each of us gifts that we can use in his service; we don’t need to wait until adulthood to start using them. Jesus began to understand his vocation when he was young as well (Luke 2:41-50), moving fully into it as an adult (Luke 4:21). Let’s encourage children and young people to expect to hear from God about how they can serve him.
- Jeremiah’s vocation needed to be developed (Jer 1:6-8) Jeremiah felt daunted by the task before him (v6), but the Lord encouraged him not to shrink from it. We need to grow into our calling, using opportunities within formal education and beyond it to learn, develop and explore how we might serve God.
- Jeremiah’s vocation was confirmed by God (Jer 1:9-10). We can have the same certainty about our vocation as Jeremiah and Jesus, but for most of us God will speak through the Christian community that we belong to. Discovering our vocation is a personal responsibility in which we explore and develop our own gifts, but it’s also a community responsibility where we affirm and recognise the gifts and calling of each other. We need to remember that God calls Christians to work in all areas of life, not just in the church. Some here will be called to work in education, in the arts, in engineering, in caring or in medicine. How can we affirm and encourage each other as we work out those vocations?
- Jeremiah listened to God as he fulfilled his vocation (Jer 1:7-8) Jeremiah’s task was to call people to walk in God’s ways and to keep God central to their lives. As we follow our vocations, we need to be faithful to God wherever we work or serve, not just blend in with the culture around us. For Christians in education, for example, this will mean making a distinctively Christian contribution to teaching and learning that is true to who we are in Christ and respectful of those with whom we work.

Show film clip two – Why I became a teacher – to illustrate this sermon.

Theme two – Facing challenge in your vocation

Luke 4:14-30

Psalm 71:1-6

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

It was easy for Jesus, wasn't it, knowing what God wanted him to do with his life. Imagine being able to stand up in front of the community that you had grown up in, and to state with confidence what God was calling you to do. And yet, although Jesus was sure about his vocation, he certainly didn't have an easy time when he lived it out.

- Jesus faced opposition as he served God (Luke 4:24-30) Some people welcomed the words and work of Jesus, but others were incensed by what he was doing. Serving God and bringing a distinctively Christian contribution to the area we are called to will often be counter-cultural and will challenge others who don't share our motivation. We need resilience, determination and wisdom as we work out our callings. We also need the support of good Christian friends, who we know will speak the truth to us in love.
- Jesus drew strength from his relationship with his Father (Luke 4:18 and 42) Jesus was anointed by God for his ministry. Later in this chapter of Luke we read that Jesus withdrew to a solitary place to spend time with God, something that he made a habit of throughout his life. The Psalmist too turns to God as his refuge and hope (Psalm 71:1-6), knowing that God has loved and cared for him from birth. Investing in our relationship with God will help us to cope with the challenges we face in exploring and developing our vocation.
- Jesus commands us to love first and foremost In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul reminds us that if we don't have love then even our most amazing achievements are worth nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). Our primary calling is to love God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. (Luke 10:25-28) That love needs to be the context and foundation in which we work out our vocation. It was his love for God and for us that motivated Jesus to follow the challenging path of his vocation. And it is that love that will sustain us as we follow our vocations.
- Jesus came to transform people's lives (Luke 4:18-19) through healing, preaching and bringing in the kingdom of God. We are called to continue that work, to develop and use our gifts as co-workers with God in building his kingdom in every area of life. Our vocations will lead us out into the wider community, serving people who need to encounter the fullness of God's redemption. We need to demonstrate what it means to live in God's ways as we work and serve, which will be challenging but ultimately lead to life.

Show film clip one – Christian teachers transform lives – to illustrate this sermon.

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The Education Sunday 2010 theme was devised by an ecumenical steering group co-ordinated by Churches Together in England representing the following Christian denominations and organisations: the Association of Christian Teachers, the Baptist Union, the Catholic Church, the Church of England and the National Society, the Methodist Church, The Salvation Army, the Student Christian Movement and the United Reformed Church. The material in this resource was written by members of the *Transforming Lives* Project and the Education Sunday team. All worship material in this publication may be freely copied for single-occasion use as part of Christian worship. Any organisations or individuals wishing to reproduce this material in any other circumstances should seek prior permission from the Education Sunday Steering Group, Churches Together in England, 27 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HH.

