

## EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

(Ephesians 4:1-16)

Intro: When I received my Letter of Call.

-From:

#Ascension Lutheran Church.

#Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod.

\*To be your pastor.

-There were about six more pages attached.

#An extended job description.

\*If you will.

#Spelling out my responsibilities.

\*As pastor of this congregation.

Writer of Ephesians didn't need that many words.

-Ephesians 4:11-12.

#"The gifts God gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ."

-In short.

#My ministry.

\*To equip you for your ministry.

#My call.

\*To help you live out your call.

I. Each Of You Has A Call.

A. You Were Called In The Waters Of Holy Baptism.

1. You were called by God:

a. To be a child of God.

b. To live out your faith.

-In the family of God.

-In the world.

#"I call on you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called."

\*Ephesians 4:1.

2. Martin Luther.

a. Talked about the "priesthood of all believers."

b. Through our baptism.

-Each of us has:

#Ministry.

#Calling.

#Vocation.

-Not limited to ordained clergy.

3. Our vocation.
  - a. Not simply our career.
  - b. But in whatever circumstance God calls us.
    - To live out our faith as a child of God.
      - #Child.
      - #Student.
      - #Spouse.
      - #Parent.
      - #Co-worker.
      - #Citizen.
      - #Friend.
    - To lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.
      - #Ephesians 4:1.
    - That is your ministry.

B. Each Of You Has Your Own Unique Gifts For Ministry.

1. Last Sunday we started our Pony Express stewardship process.
  - a. There are two pieces that you're asked to fill out.
    - Estimate of Giving Card.
      - #I talked last week.
        - \*Primarily about:
          - +Financial things.
          - +Tithing.
        - \*We give in response to God's gifts.
        - \*We can grow in our giving.
        - \*Our giving is an act of faith.
      - Time and Talent Survey.
        - #Other piece of this process.
          - \*Just as important.
    - b. God gives:
      - Different gifts.
      - To different people.
      - For the good of all.
        - #1 Corinthians 12:7.
    - c. Part of our ministry.
      - Use the gifts that God has given us.
        - #Part of my week.
          - \*Spent in preparation for Sunday morning.
            - +I study the Scriptures.
            - +I try to figure out.
              - =How to present what I've learned.
                - In a helpful and interesting way.
        - #But what if I did all of that study?
          - \*But never taught a class.
          - \*Never preached a sermon.

- #What would be the point?
    - \*I would not be leading a life worthy of the calling to which I have been called.
  - None of us leads a life worthy of our calling.
    - #If we don't share our gifts.
      - \*Keep that in mind.
        - +When you fill out.
          - =Your Time & Talent Survey.
2. If you're still discerning what your gifts might be, ask yourself these four questions.
  - a. What can I do?
    - If I think my calling is to be a professional basketball player.
      - #But I can't:
        - \*Jump.
        - \*Run.
        - \*Shoot.
        - \*Dribble the basketball.
          - +That's not my calling.
    - I had a classmate in seminary.
      - #He did all of the academic work.
        - \*He received his M.Div. degree.
      - #But he was never certified for ordination.
        - \*He didn't have the people skills.
      - #He would probably be good:
        - \*Researching.
        - \*Writing.
        - \*Editing.
        - \*Working in a library.
      - #But he wasn't gifted for pastoral ministry.
  - b. What do I like to do?
    - If you don't like what you do.
      - #It's just work.
    - One of God's gifts.
      - #Joy of doing what we do.
    - When we were putting up the lights last weekend.
      - #Keith Khoo did a lot of the work.
        - \*Whenever things got a little:
          - +Tense.
          - +Stressful.
          - +Frustrating.
        - \*Do you know what Keith did?
          - +He laughed.
      - #I think Keith thoroughly enjoys a challenge.

- c. What is of benefit to other people?
  - If I'm really good at:
    - #Picking lots.
    - #Burglarizing houses.
  - That's not leading a life worthy of the calling to which God has called me?
- d. What gives glory to God?

## II. We Have Been Called And Equipped For The Purpose Of Building Up The Body Of Christ.

### A. We Are A Part Of Something Bigger Than Ourselves.

- 1. A popular question I heard a lot in the St. Louis Co. Jail.
  - a. "Have you accepted Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior?"
    - I understand the question.
      - #I can't believe for you.
      - #You can't believe for me.
  - b. But there really isn't much personal.
    - About what God calls us to.
- 2. We're part of a body.
  - a. For a body to be:
    - Whole.
    - Healthy.
    - Functioning properly.
      - #All of the parts need to work together.
  - b. One of our members whom I visit at home.
    - Was involved in a terrible motorcycle accident.
      - #About three months ago.
        - \*We've been praying for him in recent weeks.
    - He was in the hospital.
      - #Underwent a number of operations.
    - Right now he is at home.
      - #Flat on his back.
    - His goal is to walk again.
      - #But for him to walk.
        - \*Will require:
          - +More surgery.
          - +All of the:
            - =Nerves.
            - =Muscles.
            - =Bones.
      - To work together.
  - c. That's the way it is.
    - In the Church.
    - In the Body of Christ.

3. While Keith and Jim were installing lights last weekend.
  - a. I had a chance to look at this front wall.
    - Usually I'm looking.
    - #In this direction.
    - #At all of you.
  - b. But look at these stones.
    - Each one is a different:
      - #Shape.
      - #Size.
    - But they all fit together.
      - #To form one wall.
      - #To build up one church.
  - c. Each of us is like one of these stones.
    - We're all different.
    - Some of us have rough edges.
    - Some of us have sharp corners.
      - #Sometimes we can rub another person the wrong way.
        - \*By what we say.
        - +Or how we say it.
        - \*By what we do.
        - +Or how we do it.
4. Part of our calling is to:
  - a. Live.
  - b. Work.
  - c. Do ministry.
    - Together.
    - With all:
      - #Humility.
      - #Gentleness.
      - #Patience.
      - #Forbearance.
      - \*Putting up with one another.
      - +Ephesians 4:2
    - For the sake of:
      - #The whole body.
      - #Unity.
      - #Peace.
    - That's not always easy, is it?
      - #Sometimes we get our feelings hurt.
      - #Sometimes we might be the cause of the hurt.
        - \*Whether we realize it or not.
        - \*Whether we acknowledge it or not.
    - Relationships can be broken.
      - #Between another person and ourselves.
      - #Between God and us.
        - \*When Christ is not allowed to be the head.

B. God Keeps Calling Us Back.

1. Back to:
  - a. Him.
  - b. Our calling.
  - c. Our ministry.
2. One with the nail-pierced hands.
  - a. Equips us.
  - b. By mending us.
    - In the Greek language.
    - #Words for:
      - \*Equipping.
      - \*Mending.
        - +As in mending the nets.
        - =Matthew 4:21.
        - =Mark 1:19.
        - +Have the same root.
    - #Common thread.
      - \*Putting the equipment in order.
  - c. When our:
    - Hearts are torn.
    - Feelings are hurt.
    - Consciences are troubled.
  - d. Our Lord Jesus.
    - Whose own:
      - #Body.
      - #Heart.
        - \*Were torn by crucifixion.
    - Whose own:
      - #Body.
      - #Heart.
        - \*Raised.
        - \*Healed.           +On Easter morning.
    - Calls us:
      - #Back to the font.
      - #Back to the table.
        - \*To mend us.
        - \*To equip us for our ministry.
        - \*To refocus us on:
          - +One body.
          - +One Spirit.
          - +One hope.
          - +One Lord.
          - +One faith.
          - +One baptism.
          - +One God and Father of us all.
          - =So that we might lead a life.
          - Worthy of our calling.

Concl: Here's one possible result.

I borrowed this from the August newsletter.  
-Of Eben Ezer Lutheran Church.  
#Oaks, Oklahoma.

I don't know if Pastor Jack Russell.  
-Wrote this.  
-Borrowed it from someone else.  
#I'm borrowing it from them.

"I Am My Church"

My church is composed of people like me.  
We make it what it is.  
It will be friendly, if I am.  
Its pews will be filled, if I help fill them.  
It will do great work, if I work.  
It will make generous gifts to many causes,  
if I am a generous giver.  
It will bring other people into its worship and fellowship,  
if I bring them.  
It will be a church of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and  
faith, and a church with a noble spirit,  
if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these traits.  
Therefore with the help of God, I shall dedicate myself to the  
task of being all the things I want my church to be.

Lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called.  
-You've been equipped.  
-You've been mended.