

“Church”: What Does This Word Mean To Each Of Us Individually?

What does the word “church” really mean?

From the Greek, the word used was “*ekklesia*”.

It literally means, “*called out*”.

The church is made of members who have a calling from God.

Think about it.

You and I have a calling from God.

Do you know what your calling is?

Does one have to be an ordained minister to be called?

What many Christians are missing is a sense of calling.

The Latin word *vocare*, from which vocation is derived, means call or summons.

It doesn't mean having a job.

It means having a specific call.

It means doing what one is meant to do.

It means what Rosa Parks meant when she said, “*I will no longer act on the outside in a way that contradicts the truth that I hold deeply on the inside. I will no longer act as if I were less than the whole person I know myself inwardly to be.*”

In religious language it means engaging in the work of God, something that most of you who consider yourself just regular lay members find it pretty hard to figure out what that Godly work is for you.

There were times when a few members come to me who anguish about how their present jobs feel so meaningless.

I am asked, “*How is this God's work?*”

How is clocking 9 to 5 God's work?

How is arranging chairs before a worship service God's work?

How can working at the office be a calling from God?

“*How is it God's work being a teenager and trying to sort out what to do and how be and where to go.*”

How is that God's work?

Or being retired?

Or working on a troubled relationship. How is that God's work?

"Is this what I was born and baptized to do?"

One of the historic transformation brought about by the Holy Spirit set out in the New Covenant and later affirmed by Martin Luther is the Priesthood of all Believers.

This is where all called out ones are to be engaged in God's work.

This doctrine holds that everyone who bears the name of Christ has a calling, a vocation, and is a part of God's work.

All are called.

At your baptism you were asked, *"Are you willing to accept Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?"*

"As your Lord, will you be willing to follow Him all the way?"

All of you who were baptized said, *"Yes."*

This *"yes"* meant that it was to apply not only to some parts of your life, your churchy life, but to every dimension of your being, at all times and in all places.

It is your full calling.

You are to be a work of God in all times and in all things, every part of yourself.

Somewhere, somehow along the line we have lost the historic vision of the church as a priestly people of the whole people of God. Nourished in worship, sustained in the fellowship of Christ, as we went about doing our *"business as usual"* at the office, in the schools, at home and every nook and cranny of this broken and fearful world.

We forgot that we are to be Christ's disciples, to be his hands and feet, his heart and soul: the priesthood of all believers.

Jesus said, *"I have called you by name. You are mine."*

All of you!

Living out your call may very easily be doing just exactly what you are now doing with one exception.

That exception is knowing that you belong to God, body, mind and human spirit. Remember what God says about you. You have been created, named and claimed exclusively for God's work, *"I have called you by name, you are mine."*

You are God's person, all of you, in and for the world.

Of course, that changes everything.

Your life is not your own.

There is no dimension of your life that is not claimed.

Your whole being is claimed by a generous, just and compassionate God.

You discover strength beyond your inabilities.

What is afraid becomes courageous.

What is hateful is healed.

What is shamed, becomes free.

Because you are not your own, or rather you become what you most fully really are, you are called to shine forth with the full brilliance of the Lord of love.

You are called to service.

You work for peace, healing and reconciliation in your family, the church family and in the family of nations.

Like Rosa Parks, you act from within as the whole person you were created to be.

God says to you, *“I created you. I formed you. I called you by name. You are mine.”*

Yes, that’s who you are.

That’s who we all are.

All of us.

Every part of us.