

A survey was recently done and folks who attend church were asked to state the most common question they have. The question which is the most common question for folks who come to church is this: “What does God want me to do with my life?” (Not Sam McGregor per se but each of us) This is the question that is the most burning question on our hearts and minds. “What does God want me to do with my life?”

On this day that we welcome our newest confirmands and honor high school graduates, I think this is a fair question to pose this morning. What does God want for you to do with your life? What is God calling you to do? What is God calling these young confirmands to do with their life? What is God calling these high school graduates to do with their life?

What is God calling all of us to do with our life whether we are in our 20s, 40s, 60s, or 80s? I think if we pay attention to the two Scriptures we read today we may receive some guidance in answering that question. What does God want you to do with your life? For if you are like me, you find yourself asking that question lots and lots and lots throughout your life.

p.7 – p.8 of The Hole in Our Gospel

“So, what does God want you to do with your life?”

The first Scripture we read describes the first leadership crisis in the early church. Jesus had originally chosen 12 people to be his apostles. These 12 guys were responsible for carrying out the mission that Jesus had given them. For three years they had Jesus with them who was their Bible study leader, their pastor, their leader who had given them instructions about what to do.

But now he was gone. He was gone and they did not know when or if he was ever coming back. And not only that, one of his 12 handpicked leaders, Judas, one of them, had betrayed them and turned Jesus over to the authorities. Now what exactly happened to Judas next there is some disagreement on in the Bible.

According to the version found in the gospel of Matthew, Judas returns the money he earned for betraying Jesus and hanged himself. According to Acts, there is no mention of returning money but instead Judas buys a field and in gruesome details his insides explode in that field. In fact, I did not make Tom read those gruesome details this morning in his reading from Acts. But they are there in chapter 1 if you are into that kind of thing.

So these apostles are now without their leader and they are at 11. Eleven is an unacceptable number because they are Jewish and they have to have 12. They have to have 12 because there were twelve tribes of Israel in the Old Testament and they have to maintain that number to have a sense of completeness.

There are two men proposed to assume the next leadership position. They are named Justus and Matthias. This is the only place in all of Scripture that these two guys are mentioned. They are not mentioned before this and they are not mentioned after this. We don't know anything about why they were particularly chosen other than they were believers and followers.

When these Apostles set out to choose their next leader, they are instructed to be patient and prayerful. In verse four we read that they are told that they have to wait for the Holy Spirit. This decision to find a replacement for Judas was not to be done quickly but patiently and in due time. They are told to wait for the Lord.

And then the group uses a method to find their next leader that we may find strange. They cast lots. Or draw straws. I don't think casting lots or drawing straws is the way we choose our elders. But this method had biblical support.

In Proverbs in the Old Testament, casting of lots was seen as a way for God to reveal God's will. So they cast lots and Matthias is chosen. Matthias is called by God to be a leader in the early church.

So how do we figure out what God is calling us to do in life? This where the second Scripture is helpful in giving us guidance. We have been reading through 1<sup>st</sup> John over the last several weeks. 1<sup>st</sup> John is written to a 1<sup>st</sup> Century church that is trying to figure out how to do ministry together. Today we read from the first few verses of chapter 5. And it is here that we get some very helpful guidance about what God wants you to do with your life.

What we are to do in life becomes abundantly clear in this reading. John says that we are to love God and to love neighbor, especially children. What are you to do in life? You are to love God and love neighbor, especially children. It doesn't matter what school you go to or what career you choose. John tells us that our calling in life is to love God and to love neighbor, especially children. When John says to obey the commandments this is what he is meaning.

But what does that have to do with your career choice or what school you attend or whether to retire? How does that answer the question if you are to change jobs, be a stay at home parent, or move to a new town? You can love God and love neighbor no matter what I do. And that is your answer.

On Friday I was leaving CMC. As I was leaving the front doors of the hospital, one of the security guards was walking in front of me. Like all security guards, he had on his uniform and his walkie talkie and his can of mace on his belt. I would never have paid any attention to him except for what I saw happen next. A woman was coming into the hospital who was wearing a visitor badge. She was obviously a family member of a patient.

As she walked up to the security guard, she reached out and stopped him. She said to him, “this is the last day you will see us.” I did not hear her reason why. Based on the tone of her voice I assumed it was bad news for her family member. But then she said to this security guard, “thank you so much. You really meant a lot to us and we are going to miss you.”

Rather than walk away, I decided to talk to this security guard. I told him that I appreciated how he had touched this woman’s life and how he was living out his vocational calling. He said to me, “at church, I hear all the time that we are not to just hear the word but to be doers of the word.” He said, “I try to minister to people through my work here as a security guard by reassuring them that it will be all right no matter what happens.”

Love God and love neighbor. What are you to do with your life? You are to love God and love neighbor, especially the children.

No matter what vocation you go into or school you attend or where you live, you can follow your calling as a Christian and love God and love your neighbor, especially the children. AMEN.

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-Stearns, Richard, The Hole in the Gospel: The Answer that Changed My Life and Might Just Change the World, Thomas Nelson, 2008

-Acts 1 and I John 5: 1-5

-Given: May 20, 2012 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)