

## Title: “Called. Formed. Sent.”

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Matthew 9:9, Ezek. 3:11, Eph. 4:10-14

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**Service Readings:** Ezek. 2:8-3:11, Eph. 4:7-16, Matt. 9:9-13

*Belonging to body of Jesus means being called by His Word, formed by His gifts, and sent with His mercy.*

### Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

We have just heard three scripture readings; from three different authors; separated by thousands of years:

- The Gospel reading: As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.
- The Epistle reading: we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ...
- The Old Testament reading: “And go to the exiles, to your people, and speak to them and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God,’ whether they hear or refuse to hear.”

Three scripture readings but one overarching message: life in Christ means being called by his Word, formed by his gifts, and sent with his mercy. Let me repeat that because it is that important. Life in Christ means being called by his Word, formed by his gifts, and sent with his mercy.

Now, let’s unpack this. First, being called by his Word. This means understanding that our life in Christ begins with God’s initiative. It means that he, not we, take the first steps. Left to our own desires we would have rejected him and embraced sin. But it was he who moved first, he who closed the gap between us. It is he who sent his son into the world to live among us. And it is the world that rejected Jesus, despised him, crucified him. But it is through him that God moved even closer to us – by laying upon him our most personal sins and bringing to bear his most righteous judgement. But then he moved even closer through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. In them he grafted us to his son, making us one in him so that we would enjoy the victory that Jesus earned through his sacrifice. No longer were we enemies; we were family. And all of this he did, not us.

Never lose the weight of this reality; never allow it to become irrelevant or indifferent in your life. The creator of the universe, in love, in spite of mankind’s rejection of him, moved towards you. And through a sacrifice that we will never comprehend, adopted you into his family. Hold this reality. Live in this reality.

Be formed by this reality. Christ provides to us “the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers... so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine.”

He has moved towards us, given his son for us, adopted us as his children, promised us an inheritance. And now he sends people to help form us into his likeness. Be formed! Use what God has given you to learn more about the one who created you, redeemed you, through baptism sanctified you, through the

body and blood of his son sustains you. Do not be lukewarm! Pursue him as he has pursued you... as he continues to pursue and sustain you. Every time the scriptures are read, every time the Gospel is preached, every time water is poured in Baptism, every time bread and wine touch our lips—Christ himself is present, forgiving, strengthening, shaping. Don't stay as a child, missing out on these opportunities to be formed. Don't stay as a child, being susceptible to the influences of the world. Grow, instead.

[G]row up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Called by his Word. Formed by his gifts. And sent with his mercy. Ezekiel was fed the Word of God and then sent to proclaim the message – even to his own people! We often send missionaries into foreign fields that are ripe for the harvest. And they go. And they preach. And they convert. And all this is good for it is God working through these missionaries. But take to heart God's message to Ezekiel. If you are not harvesting in foreign fields, you should be harvesting in your own backyards: in your communities, in your workplace, in your neighborhoods, in your families. And when you do, often times you will find Christians not willing to listen to you for they will be found with a hard forehead and stubborn heart. But don't let that stop you, for you go with Christ. He has called you, formed you, and has sent you out, but he has not sent you out alone. He is leading and you are following.

Some will listen, others will refuse. Even in your own family or among your closest friends, hearts may be stubborn, brows may be hard. But take courage: the One who sent Ezekiel, the One who called Matthew, the One who ascended and gave gifts to His Church— goes with you. You are not *sent* in your strength, but with His mercy. And His mercy never runs out. The same Christ who called you when you were His enemy now sends you as His messenger, and He Himself will be the strength, the Word, and the mercy that works through you. Whether they hear or refuse to hear, His Word will not return empty. His mercy will not fail.

Go! Live a life in Christ. A life that has been called by him, formed by him, and sent by him.

Go.

Please pray with me.

But now thus says the LORD,  
he who created you, O Jacob,  
he who formed you, O Israel:  
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.  
<sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;  
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;  
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,  
and the flame shall not consume you.

<sup>3</sup>For I am the LORD your God,  
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. (*Is. 43:1-3*)

Amen.