

How Can They Preach?

- I. Qualified
- II. Called

Steve Jobs, the CEO of Apple Corporation, is stepping down from his position. Because of declining health Mr. Jobs feels that he is unable to perform his duties. If you were the Human Resources director at Apple, where would you begin to find someone to replace the man who invented the iPod, the iPhone and iPad – the man who transformed everyday technology? Where would you begin to find someone who could continue to make Apple the most valuable company in America? What qualifications would this individual need to possess? I think they would need to meet some pretty high standards, don't you?

How would you go about selecting someone whose job title literally means Shepherd? Whose job description includes feeding you the Word of God, pointing you to Christ and the way to eternal life, whose responsibility it is to care for your soul and that of your children? Do you think this individual would have to have some pretty high qualifications?

If you were hiring a new pastor, what questions would you ask? Can he preach a good sermon? Is he a people person? Is he down to earth? Is he approachable, or will people be afraid to ask him for counseling when they have troubles in their life? Those are valid points for us to consider.

What makes a pastor a pastor? What makes a teacher a teacher? Picking up from last week, "What makes a public minister a public minister?" Paul answers that question for us this morning in our lesson from Romans 10.

You heard it read a couple minutes ago. Paul makes a broad, bold, sweeping statement: **Everyone who call on the name of the Lord will be saved** (Romans 10:13). But then in the verse of this text Paul wonders how that will ever happen? ¹⁴ **How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in?** They can't. **And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?** They can't. **And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?** They can't. ¹⁵ **And how can they preach unless they are sent?** They can't. If you want to follow the logic backwards, it ends up like this: we must send out public ministers who know what the Bible says, who will preach and teach so that the world hears about Jesus. Through hearing the Word of Christ faith is created in their heart, and through faith they are able to call on his name, that is, to trust in him and acknowledge him as their Savior.

There are, of course, a couple assumptions that Paul makes when he asks all those rhetorical questions. If public ministers are going to be sent out to preach and teach, they better thoroughly know what they're preaching and teaching. Paul encourages Pastor Timothy and says, **"Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth."** (2Tim 2:15) If God commands us to preach the Gospel, the good news of Jesus, a pastor needs to know that message better than he knows quotes from his favorite movies.

This training for the public ministry goes beyond our Bible study on Sunday morning. This is the daily training in the Word of God that our preparatory high schools in Saginaw, MI and Watertown, WI provide. This daily

training continues at our college in New Ulm, MN and then at our seminary in Mequon, WI. By the time students are done with that education, they are equipped with the tools they need to carry out the work of public ministry. A ministerial education is one qualification of public ministry. But it is not the only qualification.

An education doesn't make them competent. I'm sure you know people who are well educated, maybe even have their doctorate. But just because they have a degree doesn't mean they make good doctors. Someone may have *summa cum laude* on their diploma and yet they are the most boring, unengaging teachers you ever met! Twice the Apostle Paul tells Pastor Timothy that a public minister should **"be able to teach"**. (1Tim 3.2; 2Tim 2.24) The pastor and teacher knows the material and is able to help others understand.

God wants his public ministers to be qualified. We may have different ideas of what a pastor should be, so does God. In addition to being able to teach, God lists more of those qualifications, which we heard in our Second Lesson, **"Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap."** (1Tim 3:1-7) How can they preach? God would say, "They must be qualified to preach." They must be thoroughly trained in the Scriptures so that they know what to preach. But an education is only one small part of the qualifications of public ministry. Public ministers must also live and conduct their lives according to the qualifications that God lays down.

Public ministers must be qualified... we're halfway there. God also says that his pastors and teachers must be called. Listen to this Scripture from Hebrews 5:1-6, **"Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ² He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. ³ This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. ⁴ No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵ So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."**

What is God saying here? No matter who you are, what kind of degree you have, or what qualifications you have, you may not serve in public ministry without a call from God. Not even Jesus served in the public ministry without a call. At his baptism, God the Father called Jesus to carry out his work. The New Testament apostles did not appoint themselves to their positions in the church; they were called by Jesus. Today, pastors and teachers today dare not appoint themselves or assume positions in the church. A person must have a call from God to serve in the public ministry. How does that work?

In the Old Testament God called Moses from a burning bush. He called Isaiah in a vision. He directly told Jonah to go to Nineveh. When Jesus was around, it was even easier. He hand picked his disciples (which we heard last Sunday in Mark 3:13-19). He pointed to them and said, "You, you and you, will be fishers of men."

How does God do that today? As you can imagine, people in different denominations have different ideas. In the Roman Catholic Church the pope claims to be Jesus' direct representative. He claims that he is the only one who gets to pick ministers. In some Christian denominations, ministers are self-appointed. They stand up in church one day and essentially say, "OK, now I'm the pastor." In other denominations, people claim to have visions from God in which God tells them that they are called as the pastor. Others apply and interview for the job of pastor just like any other occupation. But there is no word of Scripture in which Jesus promises to call his ministers directly through visions or revelations, nor any indication that we should expect it to happen that way.

In the Verse of the Day this morning Paul says, "**Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.**" (Acts 20:28) The Holy Spirit calls his pastors and teachers. He usually does this through the group of believers that the individual is serving. There are several instances in the book of Acts where groups of believers called people to serve them publicly. We heard that in Acts 6, our First Lesson. The Bible also teaches that when a congregation calls a pastor to serve them, it is as if the call had come directly from the Holy Spirit himself. The Christian congregation has the right as the universal priesthood of believers to extend a call, and it is as valid and certain as if God called through a burning bush, a vision or whispered in their ear.

When I received the divine call to this place the president of the congregation sent me this document which reads, "Reposing full confidence in your faithfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ and in your desire to feed his sheep and lambs, Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church of Radcliff, KY herewith, in the name of the Triune God, calls you, Paul W. Horn, to be our pastor. We trust that you will recognize this CALL the voice of your Lord Jesus Christ, and we pray that he, the Head of the church, may give you willingness and strength joyfully to follow it, and faithfully to labor among us, to the glory of his most holy name and the salvation of immortal souls." I keep this document framed and hanging in my office to remind me of those important truths.

You may remember from our first lesson in Acts 6 that the apostles laid their hands on the heads of the lay members who were called. What role does the laying on of hands play in the call? Does this give the ministers a special ability to carry out their work? What is installation and ordination? Seven years ago in July 18th I was ordained and installed in this very room, and various Lutheran ministers laid hands on my head and spoke encouraging words from Scripture. It is not the laying on of hands, ordination or installation that makes a minister, but the call from God through his people. Laying on of hands, having a worship service for ordination and installation... these are human customs that we still retain to make the call public, and to revere our God who sends workers into his harvest field.

A pastor and a teacher, a vicar and a professor must be qualified and called. What does this have to do with the lay person, sitting in the pew? How much do you value having a pastor? How much do you value the teachers in our Lutheran grade schools, the professors at our seminary, college and high schools? Do you value the ministerial education system in our synod? Think about the man God used to bring Christ to you at the baptismal font. Think about the man who taught you and confirmed you in the Christian faith. Some have rested from their labors and are now receiving their eternal reward. Some of these men continue to lead you to Christ and his cross. They continue to point you to the empty tomb. They visit you in the hospital and offer comforting words from Jesus. They visit you in their homes and bring you back to Christ when you are wandering. They offer the forgiveness of sins when your guilt stricken conscience has gotten the better of

you. They patiently teach. They offer the Sacrament to you. They reassure that your sins are forgiven. How do we ensure that you can continue to receive this spiritual care?

First of all, make sure that your pastor remains qualified. Not that his preaching and teaching and duties and conduct of life is according to what you think they should be, but that they match God's qualifications. Encourage him to remain faithful in his personal study of the Word. Send your pastor back to school in the summer. Make sure he is faithful in attending his pastors' conferences. Pray for him. Allow him to carry out the duties of his office so that he can equip you, administer the sacraments to you and teach you and preach to you.

How can you ensure that you continue to receive qualified and called pastors and teachers in our synod? Support our ministerial education schools with your offerings, your special gifts and your prayers. Take note of young people who now possess the gifts the Lord would use to herald God's promises. Encourage them to pursue the public ministry. Pray that the Lord will raise up more young men to be pastors and young men and women to be teachers and staff ministers, so that more public ministers go out into the harvest fields, fields that are ripe. Pray that the Lord will raise up more young men and women who will answer the call and say, "Here am I! Send me!" Amen.