



Shepherd's Call

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Growing up in East Texas, I often heard my father refer to our town as the buckle of the Bible Belt. Most people in town identified as Christians and the churches held an impressive amount of influence. But in spite of identifying as a Christian and going to church every Sunday, I found myself an outsider (as one of my friends kindly pointed out while we were on the playground one day) because I had not accepted Jesus Christ as my personal savior. In other words, I was not "saved." Understandably upset, when I got home after school, I asked my dad what my friend meant and he explained to me what it means to be Lutheran. He talked about how much God loves us and because of that love, we as Lutherans focus on how God has claimed us, rather than how we claim God.

While this focus on the grace and love of God is certainly not unique to the Lutheran denomination, it is a cornerstone of our theology. Consequently, it shapes the way we view God, ourselves, and the world. In college, I took a class on Luther and one of the books I read was Luther's Freedom of a Christian. It was in reading this book that I began to see that God's grace and radical love shaped not only my own self-perception (as a beloved child of God), but my perception of and interaction with others as well. Since I can radically love myself because I am loved by God, I am also able to extend this love towards others because they are also beloved children of God. This love allows me to live my life in service to my neighbor, not because I am afraid of God's retribution, but because I have experienced the extent of the love of God.

This concept of radical love resulting in loving service is clearly seen for me in John 13. It is the night before the crucifixion and Jesus and his disciples have gathered for one last meal. In the midst of their dinner, Jesus, who is free to do anything, chooses to strip off his outer robe and wash his disciples' feet. He chooses the path of sacrificial love, not for future reward or because the disciples earned it through their faithfulness, but because it is the love of God bringing the fulness of life into that moment. Truly, this is the in-breaking of God's Kingdom. In the radical freedom we experience through the gospel we are invited to choose the path of loving service as God continues the in-breaking of the Kingdom in our midst. This invitation to participate in God's mission can be both daunting, humbling, and exciting all at the same time. I always love seeing the ways that you respond to this invitation and look forward to the new ways we live into this calling.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Christine