

“Know Your Name”

Bishop Kevin Strickland shared, “When I was a senior in high school, I volunteered with the mentally handicapped class and became very close with my fellow classmates who were not always accepted by others. Out of all the kids in the class, the one that I became closest to was Chris. Chris had multiple developmental and mental handicaps, but that did not stop him from being a warm and exciting presence no matter what room he walked into.

No matter how many times I would walk into the west-wing classroom, Chris would come flying out of his chair knocking it over, would come running over to me with his 5-foot-one self, weighing in at 180 lbs. He would grab me and squeeze me, and then would take my hand saying loudly, ‘**Come and see, Kevin! Come and see what found me!**’ Every time, even if it were for the fifth time in an hour, I would say, ‘Chris, show me what found you!’”

Strickland continued, “One day, when I was not in the best of moods and my patience was wearing thin, we went through the same motions, over and over. Chris running, knocking his chair over and all those who were in his path, running to me, grabbing me squeezing me. His litany began, ‘Come and see, Kevin! Come and see what found me!’ I became a little annoyed and said, ‘Chris, I don’t really want to.’ For the first time ever, Chris let go of my hand and walked away. I could tell that I had crushed his spirit. He was sitting by the window, looking out.

So, feeling like a first-class heel, I walked over and placed my hand on Chris’ shoulder and said, ‘**Chris, show me what found you!**’ He pointed to the bright blue sky outside, that earlier was dark, cloudy, and rainy. Very lightly in the horizon shown a sweet rainbow. It was faint, but there. Chris looked up at me and said, ‘**Kevin, God found me! He paint me a picture.**’ Indeed, Chris had been found and so had I.” (“Come and See What Found Me!” by Bishop Kevin Strickland on Day1.org)

Chris’ affirmation that God had found him reminds me of what Jesus was reported to have said to some of the disciples of John the Baptist, who were encouraged by their leader to follow Jesus. Jesus noted their presence and asked, “*What are you looking for?*” They gave a lame response, “*Where do you live, Rabbi?*” While answering their strange question, Jesus’ statement sought to help them see what God had painted for them, when he said, “*Come and see.*” God’s Son, the Messiah, Jesus, was how God found those future disciples and eventually called them to be Transformed Agents of our Divine Parent!

Indeed, this Worship Series and its question of “**who are you**” leads us to recognize God not only knows our names but calls us by name. The name, Jesus, was given to him through divine intervention – Mary was told to name him that by the angel. The name, Jesus, literally means, “Yahweh Saves”. Yahweh is one of the Hebrew names of our Creator. The Scriptures also reported many other names or titles used for **Jesus – Rabbi, Messiah, Lamb of God** – when those, who were found by our Saving God, sought to understand, “who Jesus was”. With what descriptors do you want to be known? Who has God called you to be? **What is the picture God has made for your life?**

The Isaiah Reading revealed for all of us how, “*The LORD called me before I was born, while I was in my mother’s womb God named me.*” Indeed, the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Galatians wrote of himself in 1:15-16b, “*But God in His Grace chose me even before I was born, and called me to serve Him. And ... He decided to reveal His Son to me, so that I might preach the Good News about him to the Gentiles ...*”

It may not seem like God has called you to serve our Divine Parent. But, if you are truly listening and observing your life and abilities, God is calling you to use your abilities – to live your life, in part, in response to the Almighty calling you by name. A dramatic biblical example came when in **John 11:43** **Jesus “called out in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’”** and the formerly dead Lazarus arose and came out! Have you heard God and Jesus call you by name – by ability and nature?

Bill Tenny-Brittian wrote about our callings, **“I’m convinced that there are many who are called to particular careers. But it also appears there are those who are called to live out their ‘calling’ in whatever job they happen to have.”** Bill continued, “For instance, my brother manages a bowling alley. Most of the time he likes his job just fine, but there’s no question it’s a job, not a calling. On the other hand, he lives out his calling every day. My brother is a people person. He’s never met a stranger. Spend ten minutes in his presence and your lousy day will begin to turn around because that’s just who he is. He doesn’t gush Bible verses, religious platitudes, or expound on deep theological mysteries. He’s more likely to crack a joke, engage in a bit of self-deprecation, or shut up and listen attentively. His faith comes out when there’s a broad opening – he doesn’t try to manipulate the conversation so he can make a faith-point. Watch my brother for an hour or so and you’ll have a good idea about who he is ... because of what he does. His calling to what he does is every bit as important and sacred and faithful as my calling into professional ministry – and his calling may be even more important because his faith touches many more unchurched people than mine does.”

Bill concluded, **“I’ve no idea what my brother’s spiritual gifts are, but if I was guessing I suspect they’d be discernment and hospitality. He can discern people’s moods, their pain, and their attitudes. Then he befriends them through gracious hospitality. He puts his spiritual gifts to work as he interacts with hundreds of people each day.”** (“Who Are You? Who? Who?... Who? Who?” article by Bill Tenny-Brittian)

By what name has God called you? How does God want you to live your life – what is your calling? As we have celebrated many times before, we are all called to follow the example of Jesus – the New Life in Christ. **That New Life is characterized by living agape – self-giving and sacrificial love.** Instead of always seeking to benefit one’s self, belonging to Jesus Christ means we are called to seek the welfare of one another and of others. We are especially given the responsibility to reach out to the outcasts – the rejected by society and to show them agape love, as well as, to work for them to receive justice.

Discovering your calling also means you will use your gifts and abilities in whatever is your job or activities you are involved in – in such a way that you will live the life God intends for you. **Consider your gifts, talents, and abilities. How are you making agape loving use of them in your everyday life? How can you more fully enhance the life of this congregation?** Let’s look for opportunities to participate in ways that support and encourage one another and the ministries of this local church! Indeed, many of our members and friends are very involved in being of service, such as being a Greeter, Usher, Fellowship Host or Hostess, Worship Leader, and many other Volunteers.

God called the Apostle Paul when he was in the womb of his mother and the Risen Jesus clarified it for him when he appeared to him on the Road to Damascus. Jesus called the deceased Lazarus from the grave and he became an extremely powerful testimony of **“who Jesus was”**. Know your name before God – your purpose and meaning – your service to our Divine Parent and Jesus Christ, God’s Son. Show – live your name, meaning, and service each day. **Invite others to join you in answering God’s Call to live the best life our Divine Parent calls us to live. Amen.**