

A while back, the San Francisco Examiner carried the photograph of a sixty seven year old black man with a smile that went from ear to ear. The light coming from his eyes was extraordinary.

"The accompanying story told about this man who had been a longshoreman all his life and had retired at the age of sixty five. He was an alcoholic. He visited the same bar every day. One day he found that he was bored and decided to ask the universe for help. He didn't really expect an answer. However, he heard a little voice inside him saying that he should go out and buy a broom and a cart. **There was no doubt in his mind that for the first time in his life he had heard God's voice.** He was instructed to spend each day sweeping the streets around Mission High School. As he did that, he stopped drinking. He soon found that he had become a surrogate grandfather for many of the students, and the kids dearly loved him and his wonderful smile. After getting to know this man, no student would dare to throw trash in the street.

"This man wasn't looking for recognition; he wanted only to do God's work. He said that he has never felt as peaceful and happy as he does now. **He knows that his mission in life is to be a messenger of God's love,** and that the form of his giving is to sweep the streets and to become friends with the students at Mission High School."

Have you heard God's voice lately? I realize that we must be careful at this point. Mark David Chapman killed former Beatle John Lennon. He said a voice inside his head kept saying, *"Do it! Do it! Do it!"* So following the mysterious voice, he pulled a .38 caliber pistol from his pocket and pumped five bullets into John Lennon's back.

BE CAREFUL IF YU START HEARING VOICES. THEY MAY NOT BE FROM GOD!! Young Samuel heard a voice. He was in the service of the prophet Eli. He was still a boy but a boy whose mother had dedicated him to God. Eli's sons had proven unfit to wear their father's mantle. That is not unusual. **Ministry is not something that can be inherited. *It is a calling, a VOCATION.*** The word comes from the *Latin word, VOCARE.* *Usually a voice is involved, a clear inner voice that must be obeyed.*

SAMUEL HEARD THAT VOICE. He was lying down and he heard a voice, *"Samuel! Samuel!"* Being the obedient child he was, Samuel replied, *"Here I am!"* and ran to see why Eli needed him. Eli said, *"Samuel, I didn't call for you. Now, go back to bed."* Again the voice called, *"Samuel!"* Again he rushed back to Eli's room. *"Here I am," he said, "for you called for me." "I didn't call for you," Samuel retorted, "Go back to bed." A third time the voice called, "Samuel!"* and a third time Samuel went to Eli to see what the old priest wanted. By this time, it has begun to dawn on old Eli that something unusual is happening here. *So he tells young Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.'"* Samuel did as Eli instructed and soon the voice called again, *"Samuel! Samuel!"* Samuel answered, *"Speak, Lord, for your servant hears."* And the voice of God spoke to Samuel and an important volume of Sacred History was begun.

NOW LET US RETURN TO OUR ORIGINAL QUESTION. Have you ever heard the voice of the Lord? Has He ever called your name? Even more importantly, **are you reasonably certain that right now at this time in your life you are where God would have you be doing what God would have you do?**

FOR YOU SEE, EVERY WORTHWHILE EFFORT IN LIFE IS POTENTIALLY A VOCATION--A CALLING FROM GOD. Martin Luther helped us see that. Until Luther's time work was viewed by Christian theologians as punishment for sin. When Adam sinned, part of the penalty was that he should work. **"Not so," said Luther. Luther saw a person's work as his calling from God.** Before Luther the word vocation referred only to life in a monastery where monks spent their lives worshiping God.

There was a French composer Charles Alkan. Alkan was one of the great pianists of his day. Yet he would perform only on rare occasions. He spent all his spare time reading the Jewish scriptures, especially the Torah. Alkan passed many years absorbed in the study of his beloved religious works until one day a massive volume of the Torah fell off a shelf, hit him on the head, fractured his skull, and killed him. You can draw from that whatever conclusions you like.

Luther proudly proclaimed that the man who shoveled the manure and the woman who milked the cow might be doing a work more pleasing to God than the monk in the monastery who spent his day praying and singing psalms. After all, every honest job is based on meeting human need, just like the role of pastor or priest. All of us have our place in the universe a reason for being a role in partnership with God. As Luther liked to say, ***"God milks the cows through you."*** Every worthwhile endeavor in life is potentially a calling from God.

Sometimes it may be hard to see how our job could be a calling from God. A certain man was eager to hear the famous chimes of St. Nicholas in Amsterdam. He had heard that they were some of the most beautiful chimes in the world. Arriving at the church he went up into the tower to watch the man who plays the chimes. To his horror he discovered that as the man struck the LARGE KEYS with his hands encased in wooden gloves. The noise was deafening. **The air was filled with a loud harshness of sound—NOT MUSIC.** The man who had been so eager to hear the beautiful chimes was very disappointed. **Surely he had heard wrong about their beauty. The next day about the same time he was wandering on a hillside near that same church. Suddenly he heard one of the most beautiful sounds he had ever heard. It was the chimes of St. Nicolas.** He wondered if the man who played those chimes ever realized what a beautiful sound he was making for the people nearby. **It sounded like only loud noise inside the tower, but to those in the countryside, it was the most beautiful music this side of heaven.**

Some of us may have equal difficulty seeing the beauty in our work. All of us may experience burnout time and again. There is a story of an elder monk, warning a younger monk: *"It has come to our attention, Brother Hooper, that you may not be happy with your vow of silence."* The younger monk is seated on a bunk with a ventriloquist's dummy on his lap. **We all get that way at times. Like that young Monk, we struggle to see God at work in our Jobs.** Suppose, however, there was no one willing to drive our buses, work our fields, type our memos, design our buildings, prescribe our medicine, teach our children, or grandchildren, etc.? Think how much poorer our world would be. **Every worthwhile occupation is a calling from God.**

SOMETIMES OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD OUR WORK IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE WORK ITSELF. For (32) yrs. Otis Coles was the bathroom attendant at New York's 21 Club. In an interview this is what he had to say, *"I make the bathroom a happy place. That sounds funny, I know, but it is God working through me."*

I believe Otis Coles is on to something. Any job can be a calling from God even cleaning bathrooms. The question is one of COMMITMENT.

In all of our readings today, God is talking to us about COMMITMENT... COMMITMENT BOTH IN AND OUTSIDE THE CHURCH. (Video) <https://youtu.be/oGt8Lnhgrz8>

NOW THAT IS A CALL TO COMMITMENT. Think how much better off our churches would be, our jobs would be, and our marriages would be, IF WE WERE MORE SERIOUS WITH OUR LEVEL OF COMMITMENT-Both in and outside the Church. Every worthwhile endeavor is potentially a VOCATION. **Our attitude about our work and our lives is very important. This brings us to the last thing to be said.**

OUR COMMITMENT IS TO GOD'S KINGDOM. Our jobs can be a VOCATION if we can see them as an extension of God's ultimate purpose for US His world. A young man ran away from his conventional middleclass home to join the Unification Church. He became a Moonie. When asked why he did it, he said: "My father only talks about getting into college and getting a good job. Reverend Moon talks to me about helping him save the world."

Douglas Hyde, an author, paints an interesting contrast between Communism and Christianity. From his days as a Communist, Hyde testifies that the Party appealed to newcomers because of the sacrifice and commitment that they saw in those already in the Communist Party. The Party knew that it was bad psychology to ask for minimal commitment or small sacrifices. New members were expected to devote every area of their lives to the Communist struggle, and that is the only example that they saw from fellow members. **By contrast, Hyde says that the Church often asks little.** Even though we have the real truth and a message worth devoting one's life to, we often seem afraid to ask people to make serious commitments or live sacrificial lives. Hyde notes that such a lukewarm Christianity cannot be expected to grip BELIEVERS minds and hearts.

Hyde is right. If our jobs are only a means of securing wealth, or passing time, or achieving status, they will eventually be as a MILLSTONE AROUND OUR NECKS. If, however, we can see them as an extension of God's plan for humanity--each of us doing our part to clothe God's children, feed God's children, teach God's children, and make God's world a better place for His children to dwell, then we can get up each morning with enthusiasm believing that we are heeding God's CALL. **Samuel's role was to be a priest of God.** There may be someone here this morning who is hearing God's call to fulltime Christian service. **If so, LISTEN!! You'll never be satisfied until you do.** But, REMEMBER... the rest of us have a calling, too. Our workplace, too, can be a cathedral where we live out the good news of God's love for His people and where we seek to be part of His eternal plan. So, LISTEN!! Amen.