

Calling – Priestly Priority

1 Corinthians 7:1-7, 13-17

Ps Johanan Justin

In our previous sermons, we learnt what it means to be a royal priesthood. Priests are mediators who stand between God and Man. What does it mean to be a priest at work? Our role as priests is to represent God before man. It is not only about evangelism at work, but also about bringing the presence of God and His shalom (flourishing) into the arena of work and reflecting God's rightful order into the brokenness of our work environment. How do we do that? Do we feel called to our work? There are two extremes, one is being unspiritual about work and the other is being overly spiritual. Some may view calling at work as unimportant, and others may view it as all-important. Are there any alternatives? Interestingly, 1 Cor 7 is primarily about understanding God's calling for us (although it is framed in the context of addressing the issue of abstaining from sex [and its implications on marriage, remarriage, singleness, and divorce] for the purpose of spiritual satisfaction). That's why v17 ends with "Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him."

4 Priestly Priorities while figuring out your calling at work:

1. Sanctification, before Satisfaction (1 Cor 7:1-2):

Sanctification is growing in holiness and becoming more like Jesus. 1 Cor 6 says our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. We are called to sanctification. *For this is the will of God, your sanctification (1*

Thessalonians 4:3a). As priests, we are to guard the temple of the Holy Spirit. We are to pursue sanctification if we need to get out of work environments that are toxic, immoral and unjust. Sanctification must take priority over our search for satisfaction at work.

2. Accountability, before Ambition (1 Cor 7:3-6):

While pursuing our calling, our ambitions do matter, but we are to consider first who we are accountable to - children towards parents, spouses towards each other and their dependents (1 Timothy 5:8). Ultimately, we are accountable to our Lord Jesus. *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men (Col 3: 23-24)*. Are we serving our own ambitions or King Jesus? As we pursue our goals, we ought to prioritize upholding God's interests.

3. Gifting, before Glory (1 Cor 7:7):

God has given us specific gifts so that we can play a unique role in bringing about flourishing. We may be obsessed with pursuing our ideas of glory so much that we become blinded to how God has gifted us uniquely to be His blessing. No matter how valuable our gifts may be in the eyes of the world, we are fully accepted, and we fully belong in the household of God. Jesus has uniquely gifted us because He intends for us to play a unique role in bringing about the flourishing of the church and the community.

4. *Peace, before Performance (1 Cor 7:13-17):*

When Adam sinned at the garden, God did not revoke the glorious calling He had given him. God instead extended a second calling: to come to Him and to trust Him to restore his calling. God restored this calling by sending His Son Jesus as the second Adam. Jesus gave up His satisfaction so that He could become our sanctification. Jesus faced all kinds of suffering and temptation so that He could be made perfect as a human being and could become our perfection. He endured the cross for our sake. He made it His loving ambition to be struck down in our place so that all our rebellion against God could be accounted for. Because of Jesus's performance, He has become our peace. If we fix our eyes on Jesus and realise that Jesus's death on the cross is God's calling to return to Him and trust in Him, it will revolutionise our sense of calling even at work. He will forever be our excellence, dignity and peace.