



"God Made Known in the Call"

Fifth Sunday of Epiphany
Saturday & Sunday, February 9–10, 2019

All Services

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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Isaiah 6:1-8 [9-13]; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11;
Luke 5:1-11

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

If you're anything like me, after **a long committee meeting**, or a tough morning in worship, the **last thing I need is regular Christianity** – you know, with all its **moral obligations and commitments**. I've always liked the **taste and appearance of regular Christianity**, but for me and my lifestyle, it's just too much. **That's why I'm so excited that I found this: NEW Christianity LITE. It's a faith that has all the same promises and appearances of the Old Christianity, but it's only ONE TENTH of the commitment.**

Now I don't have to be concerned if **EVER** spend enough time in prayer or Scripture. I don't even have to be concerned about helping my neighbors in need. **That's ALL behind me now that I found Christianity Life.** If you like being a Christian but find that it gets in the way of how **you** want to live your life, then I recommend **Christianity Life** – the faith for the "me" kind of person.



A FAITH THAT HAS ALL THE SAME PROMISES AND THE SAME APPEARANCE OF THE OLD CHRISTIANITY, BUT ONLY A TENTH OF THE COMMITMENT.

That's right, sisters and brothers. Opening soon, next to Panera, a new **Christianity Life Life Center** (we don't have "churches" or "congregations" in Christianity Lite - that's too much commitment). Come on out to **CLLC**, where we'll watch videos, of **other** people, bringing water to parched villages in Africa. We'll learn about how **other** folks are rebuilding in North Carolina and Virginia after the hurricanes of last year, and way out west in the burned-out communities in California.

Here at Christianity Lite, there is no sense of obligation, no sense of commitment, and definitely no call to ministry on your part required. If you feel moved, just text in a donation! Christianity Lite: all the flavor of the Christian faith, with only one tenth the commitment.

You know those old, full-flavored adages, like **Help your neighbor**? You don't actually need to lend them a hand, just give them a hearty 'have a great day' greeting. **See Someone in Need**? You don't need to worry about getting up off the sofa and actually **doing** something; simply open your wallet, and use the convenient kiosk located near

our entrance. What about **Loving Others**? Just think **happy thoughts**, that'll do the trick!

In this day and age, with all we have going on in our lives, who has time for all that sense of call, or commitment, that regular, old fashioned Christianity talks about? Call Now!

Speaking of call . . . How committed was Paul, in his own call? He started off his entire faith gig by *hunting down* those errant followers of a discredited rabbi. At times, Paul even caused their death. We learn about that way back in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 8, with the stoning death of Stephen. Admittedly, Paul's point of view changes very shortly after that, in his encounter with Christ along the Damascus Road.

At first, Paul is **not** accepted by those very people he was prosecuting and persecuting. When he eventually **is** accepted by the believers, more often than not, it was the *political or religious* leaders who either toss him out of town or into jail, regardless of whatever town, Greek or Hebrew, he happens to be in.

In his own words:

*I've worked much harder, been jailed more often, beaten up more times than I can count, and at death's door time after time. [24] I've been flogged five times with the Jews' thirty-nine lashes, [25] beaten by Roman rods three times, pummeled with rocks once. I've been shipwrecked three times and immersed in the open sea for a night and a day. [26] In hard traveling year in and year out, I've had to ford rivers, fend off robbers, struggle with friends, struggle with foes. I've been at risk in the city, at risk in the country, endangered by desert sun and sea storm, and betrayed by those I thought were my brothers. [27] I've known drudgery and hard labor, many a long and lonely night without sleep, many a missed meal, blasted by the cold, naked to the weather. (2 Corinthians 11:23-27 **The Message**).*

Paul was once bitten by a poisonous snake, and after using his Roman citizenship to get himself out of trouble with a bunch of overzealous town leaders, he eventually wound up in Rome, where, rather than betraying his faith, Paul accepted his execution by beheading. How committed to your call do you have to be, in order to lose your head over faith?

Look at what Paul writes about Jesus:

*[3] . . . the Messiah died for our sins, exactly as Scripture tells it; [4] that he was buried; that he was raised from death on the third day, again exactly as Scripture says; [5] that he presented himself alive to Peter, then to his closest followers, [6] and later to more than five hundred of his followers all at the same time, . . . [7] that he then spent time with James and the rest of those he commissioned to represent him; [8] and that he finally presented himself alive to me. [9] It was fitting that I bring up the rear. I don't deserve to be included in that inner circle, as you well know, having spent all those early years trying my best to stamp God's church right out of existence. (1 Corinthians 15:3-9 **The Message**)*

What kind of a call, what kind of a commitment, does Jesus have? For Jesus, his **life is** his call. His life **is** the commitment, that then comes to all of us. It's that same call that

we hear in our baptism.

Hopefully, by now, you've realized that I was being my usual cynical and sarcastic self with that whole "Christianity Lite" stuff from a couple of minutes ago. It was written by my friend Marsha Roscoe from the Synod office. Unfortunately, there **are** a lot of folks who call themselves believers, who say they are Christian, and yet that's how they look at living out their faith:

"I go to church. I put money in the plate. I'm mostly a nice person. What more do you want from me?"

How is God being made known in **your** life, through **your** call?

Do you know what our constitution says it takes to be an eligible to vote in this congregation, or any ELCA congregation? You have to be a *baptized* member who has communed *and* contributed, once, on record, in either the current or previous year. And, do you know how most Lutheran pastors, Trinity included, define an "active" member? An active member is someone who attends once a month. It doesn't seem like we're asking a whole lot of you folks, does it?

So, let me ask us, again: How is God being made known in your life through your call?

Do you know what your call is? It starts with the promises made at our baptism. Let me remind us what those promises are:

to live among God's faithful people, to take part in the word of God and the holy supper, to learn the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments, to nurture self and others in faith and prayer. Will you proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace? (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 228)

Those are the promises we are all asked to make.

How are you living out your call? **What** are you doing, that lets people know you are a Christian, that you are a follower of Christ? **What** is it in your life tells others that you are abiding the call of your baptism, without having to say it to them, verbally? To be honest, without this collar I wear, I'm not at all certain people would know that I'm a believer, based solely on my actions alone.

Christianity Lite is a funny little commercial. Unfortunately, too often, I think, Christianity Lite is how we all *actually* live out our faith. Christ calls us to a *deeper commitment*. Christ calls us to **live** that faith.

So, stop thinking "what should I do?" Stop looking for someone *else* to tell you what to do, how to believe. Instead, let's strive to be like Peter: *listen* when Jesus talks to us; **do** what Jesus tells us to.

Together, let us **heed** Christ's' call.

Amen.

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