

Your call into the Ministry
Ephesians 4:7-16, 2 Cor 5:11-21

Friends, there's a stereo-typical character in many books, movies and stories that you might be familiar with...the reluctant hero.

You might be familiar with some – Bilbo & Frodo Baggins in the Hobbit and the Lord of the Rings, Luke Skywalker in Star Wars, Peter Parker who becomes Spider Man, Neo from the Matrix, The animated kids TV show the Avatar, even Moses in the bible.

The reluctant hero is always just an ordinary person, who lives an ordinary life and then experiences some sort of extraordinary event through which they discover that they have been selected by destiny or fate as the chosen one. And as the chosen one they have a mission which they have to accomplish or the entire world will perish. The lives of millions rest on their shoulders.

And the reluctant hero always reacts in disbelief when their true nature is revealed to them – it can't be true, they're just a

ordinary person, how can destiny expect me to accomplish this, I'm not special or talented, I don't have the strength or the courage to do this. I had other plans for my life.

And so they turn their back on their calling. They reject their destiny and they try to go back to living a normal life and being a normal person.

But then some sort of catastrophe occurs...the evil forces trying to destroy the world attempt to destroy the reluctant hero, someone they love is put in danger, an innocent bystander gets hurt, and so the reluctant hero is forced to face the truth of who they are and accept what they are called to do and so they begin to take action.

And in doing so they discover that they have the strength and courage and skills to accomplish their task which they weren't aware of before. They come to discover that they are indeed the chosen one who must save the world.

And friends, the story of the reluctant hero is one that plays out in each our lives as Christians as well.

You are I often think that we are normal people living normal lives – we go to work, we take care of the bills, we look after our children, walk the dog, hang out with friends, watch TV, play sports, we go to church on Sunday – we’re normal people

But an extraordinary event has occurred in our ordinary lives – we have experienced the grace and forgiveness of Jesus Christ and entered into a relationship with God.

And in this relationship God reveals our true nature to us; we are not the ordinary people we may have thought we were. We are created by God and chosen for a task as Paul tells us in Eph 2:10

¹⁰ For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

There is a divine destiny for our lives that is being revealed to us. There are divine goals and purposes we are selected to accomplish. We are the chosen ones who hold the eternal destiny of many others in our hands.

But we’re reluctant to embrace who we truly are! We don’t want to believe it. We can’t see that we’re anything beyond the ordinary, maybe we’re all too aware of how un-extraordinary and messed up we are.

Perhaps we resent the intrusion upon our peaceful settled lives, maybe we don’t want that level of responsibility for others... but ultimately it probably because it’s not what *we* had planned for ourselves.

But friends, its time to face the truth about who God has planned for us to be – ministers!

You and I have a call into ministry – and while perhaps you think that’s pretty obvious for me, since I’m the pastor of this church – you need to realize that it’s who you are too – its your destiny!

You are a minister of the grace gift that God has given you, and in fact Eph 4:11-12 states that my gifts of pastoring and teaching are for the purpose of equipping you to be ministers with your gifts.

And if you've experienced the grace of being forgiven by Jesus Christ, you have a gift.

Eph 4:7- But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

My primary task as a pastor is not to preach nice sermons, visit sick people, or be there at spiritually significant moments in people's lives - though I do all those things.

My primary task is to train you to grow deeper in the grace and forgiveness of Jesus Christ and to help you discover, use and grow in skill with your gift, or gifts and find your place in the Body of Christ – and preaching sermons, visiting, pastoral care these are all avenues through which I try to accomplish this task of equipping.

But enough about me...let's talk about you, your destiny – to be a minister of the grace gift that Christ has given you.

Friends, after this morning you will never be able to look at yourself the same way again, because you know you have a destiny that you are called to take up.

2 Cor 5:16 says “*So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.*” That means we don't see ourselves as ordinary people living ordinary lives like everyone else anymore.

We're more than engineers, teachers, I.T. specialists, geologists, or accountants – we're ministers.

And to help us better grasp what ministry is here's a simple but profound definition

Ministry happens when someone else's need is met by your resources. In other words when you use the grace-gift that Christ has given you – your resource of teaching, of pastoring, of evangelizing, of leading, of serving, of helping, of wisdom, of whatever it is to meet a corresponding need that someone else has – Ministry happens!

For example, in the 2 Corinthians passage we read, Paul describes how the gift of evangelization – sharing the good news about Jesus- meets a need in people's lives.

In Paul's time many people were terrified of divine punishment, they had a keen sense that either deliberately or accidentally they could and had offended and angered the gods - they had a need to be reassured that while indeed they had offended the God of all gods, because of Jesus, their sins would not be held against them.

So Paul writes *this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

There's the need, and it's met by the gift of evangelism.

People who know the forgiveness of sin in Jesus Christ share this message of reconciliation between God and humans with those who need to hear it.

People have their need for assurance that God will not punish them for the ways in which they have offended him, met – Ministry happens.

And those who share this news become something different, they are not ordinary anymore. Paul doesn't call them the chosen ones, but He says "We are therefore Christ's **ambassadors**"

So friends because of Christ's gifts to you and God's destiny for you... you are not ordinary church-going people anymore.

And that's important to understand this because it's easy to think that our involvement in church is volunteer service. That essentially it's our choice to help out here or there when we have some free time, to be involved when we have a free week-end, to do some good work that we're not getting paid for.

But friends – what we're learning as we dispel our ignorance about spiritual gifts is that nobody in the church is a volunteer. You've all been given a grace gift and you are called to minister with it.

You're a minister, a hand or a foot or an eye in the body of Christ – not by your choice and available free time, but by

God's call! And this morning I want to help you move past your reluctance to accept this truth and instead embrace it fully and begin to discover the power and strength the Holy Spirit has put in you.

Listen to what the scriptures say - *For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. (1 Tim 1:7)*

Friends, it's time to begin to discover that strength and power and to begin to use it – to minister to others, but... you need to do some training. Because you are wielding the power of the Holy Spirit, the very power of God and without training and skill to use that power properly you could hurt someone or cause some damage.

When the reluctant hero finally embraces who they are and commits to the mission, it takes some time for them to become truly skilled and proficient with their powers.

They usually go through a time of training with a mentor, and there are some failures and blundered attempts before success, sometimes it forces the hero to face their inner demons, to

work through past hurt and failures and heal – but that's ok, you crawl before you walk. Friends, Christ needs to work in you, before He works through you!

And that's a good thing, because then you've experienced in yourself what Christ wants to do in those whom you are called to minister too – this is the fate of others that rests on your shoulders –

if we don't use our gifts other people will not come to know the grace and forgiveness of Christ, the healing he offers and discover their own calling to ministry.

And ultimately what this means is that they will pass into the next life and miss out on spending eternity in the new heavens and new earth with Jesus Christ! All because we did not embrace our identity as ministers! We can't let that happen.

So, friends, will you embrace your calling and your destiny today? Put away the ordinary and become who you were meant to be! Amen.