

"Why Me?"

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

God grant us the grace to recognize where we once were, where we are now, and therefore also just how blessed we truly are. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians:

The title of the sermon this morning is certainly not an uncommon question. I'm sure you've all heard it from others. You may well have asked it yourself: *"Why me?"* There are two situations, two very different sets of circumstances under which the question is asked – either during extraordinarily good times or extraordinarily bad times. When something amazing and wonderful happens to you, it's natural to ask *"Why me?"* When something terrible happens you ask the same question, *"Why me?"*, but with a very different attitude. To put it another way, the question is asked either from the perspective of humility and gratitude or pride and bitterness.

What God wants to see in his children is the same attitude of humility and gratitude regardless of the circumstances. When God allows hardship and tragedy to darken our comfortable lives, he is not displeased when we ask the same question with a humble, trusting heart. Because then our *"Why me?"* is not a challenge or accusation but an example of trust in action: *"Lord, help me to see how you are using me, even now, to accomplish your holy, loving will."* Of course that's much easier in theory than it is in practice. It absolutely requires unshakable trust in God's wisdom and love to respond to a diagnosis of cancer, a crippling accident, or the sudden death of a loved one with, *"As you will, Lord. How can I use this to your glory and the good of my neighbor?"* Difficult, but certainly not impossible. In fact that's the goal we set for ourselves this morning. That's the measure of trust and humility we ask our God to grant us this morning.

That part of God's Word that will guide our study is found recorded in the First Letter of Paul to the Church in Corinth, the First Chapter:

ESV **1 Corinthians 1:26-31** *For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to*

nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

This is God's Word. In thankful acknowledgment that these are indeed his words, and seeking to benefit also this morning from the study of these words, so we pray: ***"Sanctify us in the truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth."*** Amen.

Children typically grow up with a certain sense of entitlement that must be trained out of them. One of the more common manifestations of that entitlement mentality is when children assume that when they leave home, they get to begin where their parents left off. They deserve to start life, in other words, with all of the comforts and conveniences that their parents worked for a lifetime to earn. I'm always reminded of a "Last Man Standing" episode where one of the daughters, lamenting this particular reality in a conversation with her dad, asked, *"How is that fair? I mean, we're not poor. We have money, don't we?"* Dad's appropriate response: *"Your mother and I have money. You're poor."*

Christians of every age need to apply this same truth to our relationship with our Heavenly Father. Every single Christian, young and old, rich and poor, male and female, must approach God not only with an *"I have nothing"* attitude but also, even more importantly, with a *"I deserve nothing"* attitude.

Surely it's not difficult to see the problem if we do not. To approach God with anything other than a *"I have nothing and I deserve nothing"* attitude is infinitely more inappropriate than when children assume that they should be able to begin where mom and dad leave off in life. Approaching God with an entitlement mentality will make it impossible to maintain a sense of gratitude and wonder at the blessings with which God has filled our lives. The opposite is also true. Approaching God with the understanding that we bring nothing at all to the table will leave us thankful for absolutely everything that we *do* have, everything that he *has* given us. As always, while this is important in material things, it is critical in spiritual things.

Paul begins our text by telling the members of the Church in Corinth (and therefore also you and me) to ***"Consider your calling."*** He's telling them/us, in other words, to consider our station in life, our

situation, our résumé, before God chose us to be his beloved children. The Holy Spirit clearly didn't want to take any chances here, so instead of allowing anyone to come to some false notion, he had Paul provide exactly the right conclusion: ***“Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.”***

Do you see how important it is that we start from nothing, from zero? Everything we have is only what we have been given. Everything that we are is only what God has made of us. Starting from anything but zero will leave us, to whatever extent, ungrateful and entitled. The only possible alternative to “nothing” is “something,” and of course we don't need to be thankful for whatever good we imagine we bring to the party.

Obviously then God the Holy Spirit in our text is instructing us to ask “*Why me?*” from the perspective of humility and gratitude; to take a personal inventory of what we brought to the table when God himself rescued us from sin, condemnation, and eternal torment. The obvious answer: *“I had nothing, I brought nothing, I was nothing.”* When we truly get to that place, then we are ready to ask our question. Then, in fact, it's the most natural question we could ask: *“Why me? Of all of the billions of people in the world, why would God pick me to be one of his children and an heir of everlasting life with him in heaven?”*

Start from zero, from nothing, and God gets 100% of the credit for every single good thing in our lives, and the list of good things in our lives is limited by only one thing – the amount of time and effort we spend thinking about it. In other words, the more you examine your life, the more you recognize how richly God has already blessed you and in how many different ways.

By the way, we aren't guessing here as to whether or not God chose the likes of us so that no one would be confused about who gets the credit. Our text spelled it out for us: ***God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.***

God doesn't operate like man. His ways are infinitely higher than our own. If you and I wanted to start something – a company, an army, a church – logic would dictate that we would search out the best and the brightest. Wise individuals would want to surround themselves with those who were not only the best in their fields, but who could be counted on to supply whatever we lack. It's different with God. Not only does God have no weaknesses or deficiencies that must be supplied by man, God is not

limited by what we lack. He routinely chooses what the world overlooks so that *his* wisdom becomes unmistakable.

Our text then goes on to speak to those who have come to this good place, to those who have ***“considered their calling”*** and have arrived at the place where they ask “*Why me?*” from a position of utter amazement, humility, and gratitude. To those, Paul then sums up the greatest gift of all: ***“And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.”***

The proud and entitled are simply incapable of grasping the significance of this truth. Only those who come to know that they were absolutely unworthy and undeserving can hear these words as they are meant to be heard. Only those who can honestly look back at their lives and see failure after failure, sin after sin, cowardice, weakness, and betrayal – only those can truly appreciate the forgiveness they have been given, the cleansing they have received, the heaven they have been promised. Only they can breathe out their incredulous “*Why me?*” and know God's answer without hearing it: *“Not because you are great, but because I am.”*

We need to start here, with the question asked in the setting of wonder and joy at God's undeserved goodness. There's a reason for that beyond the fact that it's just the right thing to do. We need to establish both our own unworthiness and God's incredible love for us when times are good so that we can also carry those truths with us when times are bad. We need to ask “*Why me?*” when times are good so that we also learn to rightly ask that same question when they are not.

Ask yourself under what circumstances you've heard someone ask the question in the past? Maybe ask yourself what the circumstances were when you yourself asked the question? Most often the setting is hardship, tragedy, or suffering, and most often the tone is indignation, resentment, even accusation. “*Why ME, God? How could you let this happen to ME?*”

What's the best way to respond when someone, including yourself, asks “*Why me?*” in that way – with resentment and accusation? One of my wise old seminary professors told us that his response was always, “*Why not you?*”

Do you recognize the wisdom in that reply? It's jarring, first of all, since it's certainly nothing like we would have expected. We would have expected sympathy. We would have expected agreement that we certainly don't deserve whatever bad thing is happening. But we usually *need* jarring when we're in that frame of mind. We need to be knocked off the high horse named "Special" we rode in on and forced to reexamine the whole question from ground level, from the dust from which we were made, and in which we suddenly find ourselves sprawled. It's from that vantage point that we can begin to reassess. It's only from that perspective that we can see that it isn't the question itself that's the problem; it's the attitude in which it is asked. *"What is it exactly that you think you deserve. More to the point, why? Why do you think you deserve different or better?"*

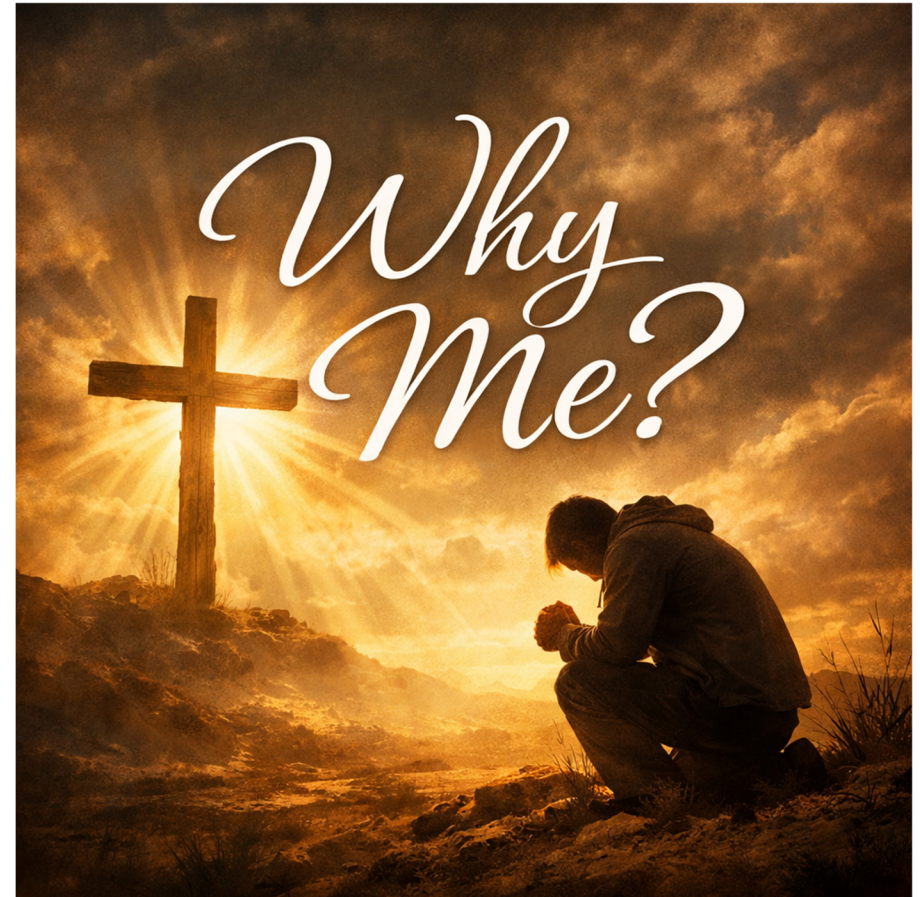
That's why we need this text, isn't it. That's why we need to go where our text takes us – back to the beginning – ***"consider your calling."*** What is it that you imagine you were before God called you to faith and made you his child? What did you have before he filled you with his gifts and blessings? What did you possess before God provided you with all that you have? And what exactly do you think your roll or mission in life is now? Pampered, spoiled brat that gets always and only what you want in life, or humble, thankful, willing servant of the God who made you what you are and gave you all you have?

It's when we get to that place that we can meet every good and bad thing that life in a broken world has to offer with exactly the same attitude, exactly the same reaction: *"Thank you for all you have given me, Lord. How can I serve you today? Show me how I can direct everyone around me to see your glory in everything I say and do?"* God help us to exist always in that place of humble gratitude and willing service, confident that in his good time, through the faith in Jesus Christ that he has created and sustained in us, he will bring our faithful service to a close and call us to his side in heaven – even though we certainly don't deserve it. Amen.

ESV **Micah 6:1-8** Hear what the LORD says: Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. ² Hear, you mountains, the indictment of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against his people, and he will contend with Israel. ³ "O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me! ⁴ For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. ⁵ O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD." ⁶ "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" ⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

ESV **Matthew 5:1-12** Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. ⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ ¶ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

ESV **1 Corinthians 1:26-31** For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."



ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mick Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist
Michael Roehl, Pastor

The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany – February 1, 2026

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 646

"Take My Life and Let It Be"

The Order of Service – Hymnal page 1ff. *(Blue Hymnal)*

The Scripture Lessons: *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

The First Lesson: (Micah 6:1-8) The Holy Spirit here addresses us through the Prophet Micah. His message is both clear and simple: To obey is better than to offer sacrifices. Though we can in no way earn our own forgiveness or salvation, yet it is the Lord's will that we obey him. This is how we naturally thank him for all that he has done for us – and continues to do for us every day of our lives.

The Psalm of the Day – Psalm 118 (Page 97)

The Second Lesson: (Matthew 5:1-12) Our Gospel Lesson is part of Jesus' great Sermon on the Mount. This reading, together with our sermon text, emphasizes the fact that God often chooses to glorify that which the world rejects. God does not look at what can be seen by man. He looks at what is on the inside. So also we should never look down upon nor despise that which the Lord values highly – every single human soul.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed *(Blue Hymnal page 5)*

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 171

"All Praise to Him"

The Sermon – Text: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)* "Why Me?"

The Offertory – *(Blue Hymnal page 7)*

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 645 *(Stanzas 1-2, 4)*

"Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken"

The Prayers of the Day, Followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 191

"Lord, Dismiss Us with Your Blessing"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (50) Average (39)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Wednesday	-7:00 p.m.	– Midweek Bible Study
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service with Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor John Hein has retired from both the pastoral ministry and from the ILC Board of Regents. Pastor Wayne Eichstadt has been appointed to the Board of Regents and will continue to serve as CLC Secretary until a replacement can be appointed. Pastor Rich Kanzenbach has announced his retirement from the pastoral ministry this summer. Pastor Aaron Ude is considering the call to Holy Cross of Phoenix. Pastor Jonah Albrecht is considering the call to Messiah of Eau Claire. Trinity of Spokane has called Pastor Johnathan Schnose.

CLC Nomination - Voting members are invited to nominate individuals to the various CLC leadership positions (officers and boards) who will be elected at the CLC Convention this June. Nominations can be made through March 31, 2026. See Pastor Roehl for details.

February Newsletter – The February Newsletter has been emailed. Because some are experiencing email problems, if you have previously received the Newsletter but you did not receive the February edition, please contact Allison Schaller or Pastor Roehl.

Care Package – All are invited to contribute to a care package being prepared for our lone out-of-town student, Aidan Pfennig. Deadline for contributions is Sunday, February 8th.