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Senior Sermon

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Good morning. As was read in the Gospel this morning, it is not uncommon to hear people talk about their calling. Many of us can attest to either have been called to do something, or know someone who is sure they have been. I am no expert of scripture, and certainly am not on what the gospel brings to us today. I did not do anything close to the semester's worth of research that was done in Dr. Swanson's Religion 215 class, which led to a 20 page paper on just five verses in Galatians. (Which, by the way, is a lot of work but is definitely worth it) I can say though, that through reading this passage, and writing this senior sermon, it means more to me now than it did before. I learned how I could look at my life through the lens of this particular scripture.

I grew up playing hockey. I am told that I skated as early as two years old, and started organized hockey when I was three, so I think it is safe to say that I don't remember ever not playing hockey. I had a lot of fun playing, and I always got to do just that, play. But when I got to high school, I sat out for the first two weeks of the season. I had pneumonia. As I got over the illness, I returned to practice, and was put on the third line of forwards. For those of you unfamiliar with hockey, on most hockey teams, the third line of forwards see a lot of action; but this was not true for the Worthington Trojans that year. It was painful for me to sit on the bench and watch my teammates play the game that I loved. It's funny. I remember the first game I was back for, I was sent out to play for the first time with about a minute and a half left

in the game, and just as I was about to line up for the face off, my coach yelled me back onto the bench. Bummer

In the next four games or so, I maybe averaged 2 minutes of playing time. I was doing the best that I could, but was not getting very far. And then, it happened. One of my best friends on the team, who played defense, hurt his knee and was unable to continue in the game. I was at the opposite end of the bench when I heard the defensive coach yell, "send Jason down here." When I got there, he informed me that I was to replace my friend at defense. Let me tell you, I was NERVOUS. Although I had been playing hockey for practically my whole life, I hadn't played defense for a long time. I wasn't even sure that I would really know what to do, let alone be able to be competitive playing against kids two years older than me. But it was in that moment, that I went from riding the bench, to playing regularly for the rest of the season.

Now this story is very condensed, and is not told to convince you that I was good or anything like that. When you look at this story, on a minute level, it parallels the story of Jesus calling the disciples to be fishers of men. Now I don't know if Simon Peter, or any of the others were very religious before they met Jesus or not, but I have a suspicion that they were aware of some of the religious practices of the day. They were at least willing to let Jesus preach from their boat, and Simon Peter was aware enough to fall to his knees to Jesus after all of the fish were caught in the net. But until that moment, until Jesus told him and the others that they were to become fishers of men, Simon Peter was a fisher of fish. He needed someone who was aware of the big picture, Jesus, to call him to something that he was meant for, that he was

good at. Now I am not trying to say that my hockey coach was, or is, a savior. But, he did know that I could be successful doing something else. He could see the big picture, something that I was unable to see. I, like Simon Peter, questioned whether what was commanded of me was going to be successful or not. But I did it, and it worked.

Now I know that I cannot speak for anyone here, but there have been times in my life where I have felt some kind of tug somewhere inside of me of which the only explanation I have is that it's from God himself. It has never been as blatant as a coach telling me to switch positions, or a savior telling Simon Peter to cast out the net one more time, but I know it was there. I have ignored this guidance many more times than I have followed it. Many times it has been fear of the unknown that has kept me from acting on this, but there have also been times where lack of time, laziness, or lack of priority is to blame.

Perhaps it is just me, but I am willing to guess that most of you have stood for something, done an act, or have found a major or a career that you knew was just right; maybe that was your calling in life. For some, this calling is to be a leader of the church; others, to be missionaries, doctors, nurses, or... Real Estate Agents? I know what you are thinking. I was making sense until I mentioned Real Estate Agents. After J-term this year, I moved home because I have only 9 credits to complete to graduate, I am going to be married March 20<sup>th</sup> of this year, and am expecting a baby on June 24<sup>th</sup>. I have also joined my family's business in Worthington in which I will be working in, you guessed it, Real Estate. I am very excited to be in this part of my life, and to work as a Realtor. I don't know exactly what my future holds; whether I will work in Real Estate my whole life or not. What I do know, is that whatever

happens, whether I am at work, home, church, the movies or whatever, I believe that I, just like everyone here, has been called to love. As Jesus teaches, all of the commandments can be summed up by two: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind; and love your neighbor as yourself. This covers all of them.

Now, I am by no means perfect. I have done, and been part of a lot of things that I am not proud of, and have things in my life that I wish I could go back and do over; to have spoke up, when instead I was silent; to care, when instead I looked away; most of all, to show love when instead I did not. We don't have any idea what some of the people we encounter are going through. I still to this day, remember a day of school up in St. Cloud, when someone on the bus on my way to campus smiled at me. Please appreciate how small of an act this was. A smile. Before that moment, I was lost. I was going through a very tough time, which visits most students some time in their college careers, where I just did not know where I was or where I was going, or why I even existed. When that girl smiled at me, it didn't fix everything, but it was uplifting. I don't know who she was, and even though her face has faded from my memory, that little act of kindness has stuck with me. Sometimes even the smallest acts of kindness can have high effects.

I guess what I am trying to say is, don't be afraid. Go for it. If you feel led to something, whether it is a career, an act of kindness, or some kind of participation in something, do it. Maybe it will be a life changer. Maybe it is God leading you to your calling.