

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

[Anxious – What is Paul saying?]

Today’s epistle reading was a challenging bit of Scripture.

The Apostle Paul said “*let those who have wives live as though they have none.*”

(Whew! That might not sound like the best marriage advice!

I guess I get to decorate every room with Green and Yellow and Packers gear!)

And he doubled down! He said “*the unmarried man is anxious about things of the Lord...*”

while “*the married man is anxious about worldly things.*”

and “*the unmarried... woman is anxious about the things of the Lord...*”

while “*the married woman is anxious about worldly things.*”

It almost sounds like he’s saying it is ‘more holy’ to be single than married.

And, in fact, some Christians have cited this very verse to make that very mistaken argument!

Of course, we know both single people and married people feel anxious

about things of the Lord and about worldly things.

Those anxieties may be *different* between single and married people, but they’re just as *real*!

And single people may face a constant anxiety to find “the one,”

even if they may not be called to marriage.

Perhaps singleness and abstinence is their calling,

but every holiday they get badgered about ‘settling down and having kids.’

We may have an urge to sit Paul down and correct him:

single people feel anxieties about “*worldly things*,” too!

Furthermore, Scripture itself testifies that marriage is *good*—

and not just ‘*good*,’ but ‘*very good*!’

That is what God said when he blessed Adam and Eve’s union: “*It was very good.*”

Paul knew this. He studied the Scriptures!

Marriage is good! It was the way God intended man and woman.

Singleness is good! It was the way our Lord Himself lived on earth.

Both are good and right callings—what we call **vocations**—for Christians.

So where does Paul get off saying this stuff?

What exactly does he mean, “*let those who have wives live as though they have none?*”

[Vocation – The Christian’s Calling]

When something is confusing, there’s usually a key to understanding it.

In the real estate business, the key is: Location, location, location.

In the Christian life, it’s: Vocation, vocation, vocation.

The sacred “calling” given to each of us to serve others as God wills.
For some, the vocation may be marriage.
For others, singleness and abstinence.

Our vocations aren’t limited to marital status.

We have vocations in *every* position that God has given us:

Parents, teachers, students, businessmen, tradesmen—all of these are *vocations*.

We fill multiple vocations at the same time.

Vocations change over time.

We Christians are to view our vocations in a special way.

If we want to know what Paul means, we need to understand vocation in three ways:

Vocation *in* Christ.

Vocation *for* Christ.

Vocation *because of* Christ.

[Vocation *in* Christ]

In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus calls Andrew and Simon.

“*Follow Me,*” He says, “*and I will make you become fishers of men.*”

The emphasis belongs on that first part:

“*Follow Me,*” Jesus said.

“*Follow Me, and I will fill your life with vocation and meaning,*” He says to us.

Christ comes first. We follow.

When we get that order right,

then we can do what he empowers us to do.

Then, we can set aside the “worldly anxieties” Paul talks about.

Then, He makes His words true: “*I will make you become fishers of men.*”

Vocations flow from that rightly-ordered life:

We receive vocation *in* Christ.

[Vocation *for* Christ]

Vocations are also done *for* Christ.

Andrew and Simon heard Christ’s call,

and “*immediately they left their nets to follow Him.*”

They went where they were called, as God desired of them.

God has desires for us too.

God desires that we serve our neighbors. He calls us to do so in his Law.

When serve our *neighbors* in our vocations, we are actually serving *God!*

And this applies even to the most mundane of our vocations!

Martin Luther once put it this way:

‘a father who changes even a single dirty diaper
does a work so great it makes the angels smile.’

(In my experience a father who changes a *single* dirty diaper
probably won’t receive that level of praise... but the point stands!)

God does not need your good works; but your neighbor does.

And when you consider your service as ‘vocation *for* Christ,’

It puts tremendous value and importance on everything you do for others.

Christ has made even the most mundane vocation holy.

Your vocation is done *for* Christ.

[Vocation *because* of Christ]

Yet we don’t always fulfill our vocations to the best of our abilities.

We don’t want to love our neighbors.

(Sometimes that dirty diaper is a real stinker, if you know what I mean,
and we’d rather pass it off to someone else—metaphorically speaking, of course...)

Or maybe we don’t think we’re qualified or capable of fulfilling these vocations.

Maybe we aren’t.

Maybe we’re consumed by those “worldly anxieties” Paul talks about.

We certainly don’t *deserve* the vocations to which God calls us.

Even so, God called us when we were still sinners.

He is the one who called Andrew and Simon, struggling with rough, heavy nets of smelly fish.

He called them to follow Him, to hear His teaching, to see what He had come to do.

He is the one who took on all the “worldly anxieties” and hung them on the Cross *for us*.

He is the one who defeated those “worldly anxieties.”

He is the one who rose again.

He is the one who called you through baptism and made you His own.

He is the one who calls you to your vocations.

You need not be consumed by “worldly anxieties.”

You have peace that surpasses all understanding.

You have been empowered to fulfill your vocations.

[What is Paul saying? – Joyful, not Anxious!]

Yes. Christian living is all about vocation, vocation, vocation.

How does that possibly explain what Paul meant by:

“*let those who have wives live as though they have none.*”

Let’s connect those dots.

We have vocations *in* Christ because we are to *follow* where He calls.

We have vocations *for* Christ because our good works for neighbors *are* good works for God.

We have vocations *because of* Christ because *He* calls us.

Whether you are single or married,
whether your vocations are big or small (by human measurements)
whether you mourn in your vocations or rejoice in your vocations— that’s all irrelevant.
You are a follower of Christ; He is your ‘single’ identity.
That’s what Paul means.

That doesn’t mean husbands and wives are to forget their vocations to each other— far from it!
It means our vocations need to be rightly-ordered.

Jesus changed the old, anxious order of the world.

Paul says, “*The present form of this world is passing away.*”

Christ is doing something new—He began it in *you* at your Baptism!

And He’s coming back soon to finish things up.

Prepare for that day by seeing your vocations for what they are:

They are not things-that-have-to-be-done-for-the-sake-of-doing-them,

but rather, things-joyfully-done: in Christ, for Christ, because of Christ.

[Vocation as Christ – Masks of God]

That adds another aspect to your calling: Vocation *as* Christ.

Just as God works through real means like Baptism to save us,
he works through real people too.

You are His ‘fishers of men.’

You get to be Christ’s hands and feet in the world.

You are called to share his Good News with the world.

You get to fulfill your vocations on behalf of Christ,

as if you were an actor putting on a “Jesus mask.”

(I’m not talking about the masks we’re wearing today.)

I mean a mask that shows people the face of God.

A mask that, when you put it on, others see Jesus.

Jesus in your words.

Jesus in your actions.

Jesus in your daily vocations.

A mask to show that Christians do not fret over “worldly anxieties,”

But as Paul says, are joyfully “anxious for the things of the Lord” and His return.

Let’s mask up!

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

**Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous deeds among the people. Amen! (Psalm 96:3)**
