



Live a Life Worthy of Our Calling

EPHESIANS 4:1-6

NORTH/WEST LOWER MICHIGAN SYNOD ELCA

2025 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

As part of the order for the Opening of a Synod Assembly, we say: “Live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, making every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” These words are taken from Ephesians:

“I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to live in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:1-6).

The calling of a bishop—or renewing the call of a bishop—at the 2025 Synod Assembly affords the Synod the opportunity to once again renew our conviction that none other than God through Christ Jesus calls us not merely to a specific activity or occupation but to a life lived entirely in God’s grace. We also renew our commitment to live a life worthy of this calling. Both our conviction and our commitment come as God’s gift and are grounded in God’s grace.

Under the theme “Living a Life Worthy of Our Calling,” voting members and visitors at the 2025 Synod Assembly will consider three aspects of God’s gracious gift of life lived entirely in God’s grace: (1) called by God, (2) united in Christ, and (3) given to one another by the Spirit.

CALLED BY GOD

None other than God called us to live in God’s grace as God’s holy people. In Christ Jesus, God chose us not only before we did anything to deserve or even desire it, but before the creation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). The life that we are to live in response is “worthy” (Ephesians 4:1) of this calling not because we can ever deserve God’s overflowing grace, but because God’s grace both calls for and calls forth a life that is in line with God’s intent for all creation. More than an aspect, activity, or occupation of our lives, God desires and claims the entirety of our life in Christ, individually and especially as the church. This life within God’s grace has always been God’s plan.

To live a life worthy of our calling is to trust God’s gift and promise that, both individually and as the church, we will “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:15-16). Growing up in every way into Christ is not a passive process. In response to God’s gift and promise, we spend the entirety of our lives striving to “come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ” (Ephesians, 4:13). To live a life worthy of our calling is to celebrate that we are held by God’s call and will grow into Christ.

UNITED IN CHRIST

Since God intends to bring everything to unity in Christ (Ephesians 1:9-10), a life worthy of our calling nurtures the unity of the church, which is Jesus Christ. We are to “maintain” (or “guard”) the unity given by the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3) because the unity that is ours in Christ is a gift from God and not something we produce. As signs of God’s gift of unity, Ephesians names seven (the biblical number of completion) things that are “one”: “one body of the church, called and sanctified by one Spirit; one hope which flows from God’s calling; one Lord Jesus whom we all confess and into whom we are growing up; one faith and one baptism that bind us to Christ and to each other.”[1] All this is from the one God and Father of all, whose saving activity fills the cosmos. The unity of the church is rooted in the eternal unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We do not create this unity, but to live a life worthy of our calling is to nurture and care for it in the way that we treat one another, with humility and gentleness, patience and love (Ephesians 4:2). To live a life worthy of our calling is to celebrate that we are united in the Lord who is head of the whole body.

[1] Brian Peterson, “Commentary on Ephesians 4:1-16,” Working Preacher, August 5, 2018.

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/ordinary-18-2/commentary-on-ephesians-41-16-4>

GIVEN TO ONE ANOTHER BY THE SPIRIT

In Jesus, God has broken down the “wall” between Jew and Gentile, now offering through the blood of the new covenant, salvation and *koinonia* [true community] to all persons. Within the church, “bearing with one another” (Ephesians 4:2) is necessary because God has not only given the church its fundamental unity, but has also given the church a rich diversity of members. Each is a recipient of God’s grace (Ephesians 4:7) as the Spirit calls, equips, and gives people to the church. God’s intent is not uniformity; God intends a unity that reflects and serves God’s reconciliation of the whole creation in Christ. “If we aren’t encountering and learning to love people who differ from us within the church, then something is wrong; this is not the healthy community that God desires.”[2]

Differences are not divisions. Especially Spirit-given differences within the church are not a problem but are God’s gift so that together we can learn how to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) in a manner that is not “abusive speech used to push down others and gain power for ourselves, all under the self-justifying banner of ‘truth-teller.’”[3] To live a life worthy of our calling is to celebrate that we are given to one another by the Spirit as a gift.

[2] Peterson, “Commentary on Ephesians 4:1-16.”

[3] Peterson, “Commentary on Ephesians 4:1-16.”