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Call Day Devotions 1992

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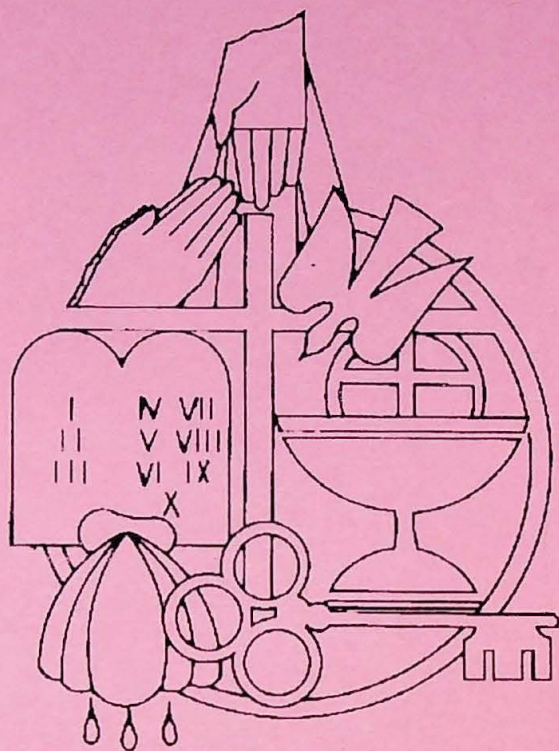
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Call Day



Devotions

Editor's Note

This devotional booklet has been prepared by men of 1992 graduating class to be used by seminarians awaiting a call to the Office of the Holy Ministry. The purpose is to strengthen those facing such a watershed event in their lives with the Gospel. May the following devotions be a blessing to you. My thanks goes to Professor Feuerhahn as faculty editor and especially the contributing writers, without whom this would not be possible.

David Kuhfal

I Am With You Always

Day 9

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20)

It was the eleven disciples who met Jesus upon the mountain in Galilee. And immediately upon His arrival the disciples fell down to the ground and worshiped Him. Flat out on the ground and worshiping is the correct posture for anyone being in presence of the ever-living Lord. This Lord who has been given all authority in heaven and earth is the same Lord who calls men to serve Him in the Office of the Holy Ministry. He instituted His Holy Office as He empowered and commissioned the eleven to, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." The ones having been called and having been sent have the certainty that it is with Christ's authority that they do such great works as to Baptize and teach. In the Word of God, the one having been called into the Office is assured that he will never be left alone in this overwhelming task of proclaiming the Gospel and administering the Sacraments. Jesus said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." It is comforting to know that Jesus has promised always to be there for those He calls to carry out His great commission. Left to our own inventions it is a sure thing that we could

not live up to the responsibilities inherent in the Holy Ministry. But with God all things are possible.

Personal feelings of ones inadequacy for the Office of the Holy Ministry may account for much of the tension that builds as the countdown to call day and graduation continues. So, it is not only the tension of not knowing where we will serve our Lord and His people, but the question rightly arises, "Who am I to deserve the honor of this calling?" The answer is that absolutely no one deserves the honor, but just as we were called by the Holy Spirit to faith in Christ our Lord we can take confidence that in our ordination the Holy Spirit has completed His work of calling us to the Holy Ministry. It is God's doing, He is the one who calls, He is the one who ordains, He is the one who said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." No greater strength and comfort can be found than in the Word of Him who calls men into his Holy Ministry.

Prayer: Blessed Father in heaven it is with great fear and trembling that we anticipate being Your servants in the Office of the Holy Ministry. Grant us Lord a strong faith that we may serve you boldly and with confidence in the Holy Office You ordained for the administration of Your Means of Grace and the care of Your people. As You promised, be with us always. Amen!

Peace Be With You

Day 8

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." (John 20:19-23)

As the disciples waited behind closed doors they were filled with fear. Fear is something to which all who live in this world can relate. Fear of the unknown tends to make life very uncomfortable at times. As we in the graduating class of Concordia Seminary impatiently await call day, fear may creep in and even shake our confidence in God sending us to the right place. There may be such doubts as, "Can He

really have His way with us through all the human intervention that goes on in this call process?" He can and He will. It is He who created heaven and earth, it is He who calmed the raging sea, and it is He who will do with you and me as it pleases Him.

In the verses of the text just read we take heart and find our fears relieved. Jesus brought peace to the disciples as He stood in their midst. "Peace be with you," Jesus said, and His words accomplished their task, as they always do. The peace they received was that which flows forth from the wounds He revealed to them in His hands and on His side. In these days of anxious waiting it is good for us to hear these comforting words of our Christ. "Peace be with you." The same peace that flows from the wounds of Christ is ours as we take confidence in His divine calling. He is the one who calls men into His Holy Ministry. It is His calling and it is His Office. In this Office resides the authority to forgive and to retain sins. (Jn. 20:23) Christ grants this authority to those He calls into His Holy Office, in order that they as undershepherds may care for the Good Shepherd's sheep. On call day there will be many of the Good Shepherd's sheep who rejoice as God selects a shepherd to tend the flock of which they are a part. At Holy Ordination both the shepherds and the sheep will celebrate the consummation of God having called another shepherd to tend His flock.

Take heart, His peace is your peace. He is the one who calls men to His Holy Office. The Office is His and is His to give. "Peace be with you."

Prayer: Lord of heaven and earth you are the giver of all good gifts. You sent your Son into a lost and fallen world to redeem it, and He did. According to your grace Christ our Lord instituted the Office of the Holy Ministry to share Your forgiveness with the world. Grant us your peace and confidence as we await Your holy call. Amen!

Are You Ready

Day 7

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. All that

belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. (John 16:12-15)

Jesus spent some three years preparing His disciples for His departure and their future ministry. He knew that once He left they would begin to have doubts and fears. He knew the Disciples would have questions like: "How can I now fill such a high calling? Can I have all the answers? Will I be able to handle all that might come my way? As we stand at the brink receiving a call to the Office of the Holy Ministry, we (or our spouse and children) might have doubts and fears as well. Can God use even me for His service? Do I have all the answers? Do I have what it takes to handle what is bound to come my way?" These questions are questions that we will face throughout the years not just now as call day approaches. They are questions, doubts, and fears that Satan sets before us to break down our trust in God and His Word. Satan would have us believe that once we graduate that all will depend on what we do and know. He desires to have us believe that it is our ministry and it all depends upon what we are able to do. If our trust is in ourselves, we are open to Satan's attacks and are bound to doubt. But God has another way.

Jesus in our text shows us that other way. The Father has given all to Jesus who gives it to us through His Spirit (v. 15). Here in our text Jesus bids us to put our trust in Him and the Spirit. His Words are comforting and assuring words. God calls and puts us into the Office. God will not call us into His service only to abandon us. There is much more that God has for us to learn, more than we could bear now (v. 12). This He will teach us in time; in His time. He has given us His Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who will guide us in all truth (v. 13). Our theological education is not over once we leave here. God will continue through His Spirit of truth to guide us into all truth, in all that we face. We have Jesus' sure Word on it. God does it this way that we might in faith trust Him in all things. This gives us peace. Jesus concludes this discourse with His disciples: "I have told you these things, so that in me you might have peace." It is God's Office. He puts us there. He guides us in all truth. He gives us peace.

Prayer: Lord God, you call men to serve Your church as pastors. You see how unfit I am to administer this great and difficult office. Had I before been without your help, I would have ruined everything long ago. Therefore I call on You. I gladly offer my mouth and heart to Your service. I will teach the people and I myself will continue to learn. To this end I shall meditate diligently on Your Word. If it be your will, use me, dear Lord, as Your instrument. Only do not forsake

me; for if I were to continue alone, I would quickly ruin everything. Amen. (Adapted from Luther's "Minister's Prayer.")

Trusting in God

Day 6

This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. (Jeremiah 17:5-8)

As call day approaches it is sometimes very easy to get caught up in the human side of the whole call process. We begin to focus on the temporal and lose sight of the spiritual. Sort of like Judah's situation at the time of Jeremiah.

The once powerful Israel was now a divided kingdom. In order to regain some of the glory that had been lost Judah had made alliances with foreign powers and increased foreign trade. To bolster the spiritual bankruptcy King Josiah launched a tremendous religious reform. Through all of her programs Judah had developed a false security in herself that refused all calls for repentance. So, God, through Jeremiah, gives her a little reminder of the first commandment...

Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his arm, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a shrub in the desert and shall not see prosperity when it comes."

Jeremiah lived to see the Kingdom of Judah invaded and laid waste, her allies shattered, the people led into exile, and the temple sacked. Like a shrub in the desert, Judah withered away before the hot winds of time and world events. Judah was again reminded that "vain is the help of man." (Ps. 108:12)

When we consider our position as we await God's call into the Holy Ministry often we begin to look to our talents and abilities for our confidence. We may take pride in our GPA (or lack thereof), in our great personality, in our great vicarage experience, or in our steadfast defense of pure doctrine. We begin to think that these things will assure us a "good" call. Like Judah, we become very self-sufficient. Looking first to ourselves, rather than to God for strength and consolation as we face our cares and concerns as call day approaches.

As the tree's future depends on soil and water for life, so we must draw power from God, who alone gives life. Like a tree, Judah must depend on nourishment from the outside, and in placing the confidence of her heart in man, she was doomed to destruction. When we attempt to find life and strength within ourselves, we also are doomed to failure. Only by placing our trust in God do we receive the water of life to sustain us in this world. For His love penetrates our self-centered hearts, heals, and refreshes us.

God sees our predicament and gets to the root of the matter for Judah and for us. The prophet Isaiah writes, "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious." (Isaiah 11:10) It is Jesus who grew up "as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground." He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. It is He that bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows. God has not left us in the desert of sin and self-centeredness. Jesus, the righteous branch, God's own Son came into the world with a heart fixed upon His heavenly Father for all things. He rejected all thoughts of human independence and took upon Himself the guilt of our sin and died on the cross for our forgiveness. There, on Calvary, He put to death all human pride that seeks to live apart from God.

In our Baptism God declared us to be good trees. He has brought us to the refreshing waters and has planted us there. We are now reckoned as the righteous. As call day approaches we have no fear or worries knowing that God has not left us out in the desert as shrubs to fend for ourselves. We will see His prosperity when it comes. Without Him we can do nothing, but rooted and grounded in His love and forgiveness He promises that we will bear much fruit.

Prayer:

In you, Lord, I have put my trust;
Leave me not helpless in the dust,
Let me not be confounded.
Let in your Word my faith, O Lord,
Be always firmly grounded.

With you, Lord, I have cast my lot;
O faithful God, forsake me not,
To you my soul commending.
Lord, be my stay and lead the way
Now and when life is ending. Amen.
(LW 406: 1,4)

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold; this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged." Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." (Isaiah 6:1-8)

Isaiah was privileged to see a vision of Yahweh which was unlike any seen before. Isaiah came into God's temple, the place where He had put His name. Upon entering into the temple Isaiah saw the Lord in His glory and majesty. The seraphim were praising the Lord calling out the glory of His name. The glory of the Lord filled the temple and it shook with the proclamation of His holiness.

What could Isaiah do? He did the only thing any man could do. In the face of almighty God, Isaiah acknowledged his sinfulness and feared his own destruction. Isaiah acknowledged his own sin and the sin of all people as he stood in the presence of God. Isaiah cried out for mercy for he knew death and eternal damnation were what he deserves.

The Lord does not send destruction upon Isaiah, but rather sends a messenger to bring a comforting word of forgiveness. The angel took a coal from the altar and with it purged the sin of God's servant. The angel did not act on his own accord but on the Lord's. By the Lord's action, by His command, forgiveness is given to a man. The forgiveness comes from the altar which is in the midst of God's temple. The focal point of the forgiveness is the altar, the place where the sacrifice is made. Having been forgiven by God, Isaiah heard the Lord's Words, "Whom shall I send and who will go for Us?" There was no question of, "Where do you need someone to go?" or "What is the place or what are the people like?" Isaiah simply responded as one of

God's servants who knew His grace and forgiveness, "Here am I! Send me." Isaiah had the full assurance that God had forgiven his sins. As a forgiven child of God he was able to serve the Lord. The joy came from service to God, not from the type of service or the place of service.

We are not different than Isaiah. While we have not seen visions of the Lord sitting upon His throne, we have like Isaiah been forgiven of all our sins. The altar of the cross is the focal point of our worship. It is the place where the ultimate sacrifice for sin was made in the person of Jesus Christ. When the righteousness of the Lord is revealed to us through His Word we are left to see nothing but our sinfulness. We like Isaiah have no response but to mourn over our sin. Yet, like Isaiah, the Lord does not leave us in our sin, but He sends His messenger to bring that forgiveness won on the altar of the cross to us. The pastor poured water on our head, or pronounced Holy Absolution, or put the Lord's very body into our mouth, forgiveness was given where none was deserved. We have tasted firsthand of the grace of God.

In a few short days we will hear the Lord say, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" A man will speak for God and call out the name of a church. Immediately preceding the name of the church will be the name of a man. A man who has been forgiven all his sins through the action of God. That man whose name is called--You, as your name is called--is given the joyful opportunity to repeat the chorus which Isaiah first spoke, "Here am I! Send me." It does not matter where, or to what type of service, for it is the Lord's call to be His messenger. The one who will deliver His forgiveness to those who mourn over their sin. The one who will be His hands and mouth. The one who will take from the altar of the cross that forgiveness which was won and give it to men, women, and children that they, like you, might know the grace of God.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, in the presence of Your holiness I can do nothing but acknowledge my sin. As Isaiah, I would be fearful of You if it were not for the fact that You have saved me from my sin through the death, burial, and resurrection of Your Son Jesus Christ. Knowing first hand Your grace and forgiveness, I do now, also like Isaiah, desire to serve You in Your kingdom. Father, if it be Your will, call me to work in Your harvest field. Give me the grace to accept what You decide and the courage to go forth in Your power, to the end that I may be used as an instrument of salvation for many. Through Christ I pray, Amen.

When a place has been assigned to a Lutheran candidate of theology where he is to discharge the office of a Lutheran minister, that place ought to be to him the dearest, most beautiful, and most precious spot on earth. He should be unwilling to exchange it for a kingdom. Whether it is in a metropolis or in a small town, on a bleak prairie or in a clearing in the forest, in a flourishing settlement or in a desert, to him it should be a miniature paradise. Do not the blessed angels descend from heaven with great joy whenever the Father in heaven sends them to minister to those who are to be heirs of salvation? Why, then, should we poor sinners be unwilling to hurry after them with great joy to any place where we can lead other men, our fellow-sinners, to salvation?

The above quote was used by the C. F. W. Walther as his introduction to the twentieth evening lecture as he delivered *Law and Gospel*. This lecture was delivered by Dr. Walther on February 27, 1885. Here on the campus of Concordia Seminary in 1992 those of us who are anticipating a call into the Ministry began watching the calendar even before February 27. Walther was no doubt focusing the attention of his students on the fact that the place one is sent to is the place which God has chosen for them and as such, there is no better place. We see this from the fact that Dr. Walther immediately begins to address problems and concerns which every pastor faces in the parish. In the midst of any situation or problem, in the midst of difficulties or heartache, the one constant comforting factor is that this is the place God has appointed for me to be for Him. Here is where He wants me and here is where He pledges to be with me and work through me for the salvation of His people.

While there is an amount of anxiety as well as excitement which accompanies call day, there is also comfort in knowing God is working through the call to lead us to our place of service. We see a similar situation in the life of our father Abraham. God came to Abram and called him to leave the household of his father and to enter into a land which God had chosen for him.

Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you And make your name great; And you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

So Abram departed as the LORD had spoken to him, and Lot went with him. And Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Then Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his brother's son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people whom they had acquired in Haran, and they departed to go to the land of Canaan. So they came to the land of Canaan. Abram passed through the land to the place of Shechem, as far as the terebinth tree of Moreh. And the Canaanites were then in the land. Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, "To your descendants I will give this land." And there he built an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. (Gen. 12:1-7)

God called and Abram went to the place which God appointed. God blessed Abram and He did become a blessing to all the families of the earth. This blessing came through him as his descendant, Jesus Christ, went to the place God appointed for Him and became the ultimate blessing for all people.

The author of Hebrews tells us of Abraham and others like him who were called by God. He tells us of what they desired.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude; innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them. (Heb. 11:8-16)

There are five points in this text which reveal to us the attitude of those who have gone before us. 1) They obeyed the call of God. As redeemed children we are now able to answer the call of God. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we are led and enabled to do the will of God. 2) They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims. They understood that as God's children, this world was not and would never be their true home. 3) They did not look to the past as something to which they desired to return. What was behind was viewed as no longer desirable. 4) They desired a heavenly country. What God had in store for them in the future far surpassed any limited toil that would present itself in the present. 5) The faith which God had created in their heart never wavered, but remained strong unto death.

As we anticipate a call into the Holy Ministry Dr. Walther's words bring comfort to us concerning the future. As we anticipate service in God's ministry, the life of Abraham and the words of Hebrews bring us the assurance that God is continually faithful to His servants.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray You will so guard my heart and mind that I may be totally open to Your call to service. Through the power of Your Holy Spirit enable me to view the place which You have selected for me as the most precious spot in all of Your creation. Guide me as I continue to prepare for Your call and give me a willing heart to rejoice when it comes. Amen.

Take This Thorn From Me

Day 3

To keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)

It never fails. Every year at the call service there always seems to be a call or two that elicit a chuckle from the worshipers present, or a groan from a candidate called. Usually, it is a call to someplace like Chickasaw, OK or Zap, ND. Sometimes, it is to someplace that is

perceived to be too far East or too far West, someplace either too hot or too cold for the candidate or his family, etc. Generally, the laughs and groans are unfounded, but once in a while the anxieties seem more justifiable. (You know, like the congregation that has had 3 different pastors in the last 5 years, or the one with a two bedroom parsonage for a family of six!)

As the day draws nearer we find ourselves praying, as Paul did, that the Lord would spare us from such "thorns." Although no one knows for sure what Paul's thorn was, it is fairly certain that it was not a call to Mule Shoe, TX. Nevertheless, we can gain some insight from Paul and some comfort as we anxiously await to hear how and where the Lord would use us as heralds of His precious Gospel.

First of all, Paul tells us that his thorn was "a messenger of Satan" sent to torment him. Though it was from Satan, it was permitted by God and used by Him for His servant's good. God's gracious and restraining hand is never withdrawn from His children. As we get our first calls into the ministry we can be assured that as adverse as the situation may seem it is no "messenger of Satan." Rather, it is the Holy Spirit who makes us overseers of God's flock. (Acts 20:28) Wherever we are called we can be sure that it is our gracious and loving heavenly Father who has called us to be His representative in that place.

Secondly, no matter the geographic location, demographics, pay scale, or climate of our first call we *will* be faced with thorns. This side of heaven, as saints and sinners, we still bear the fruit of the seeds that Adam sowed. Thorns and thistles will be part of the crop in the congregations we will serve. However, that is not necessarily something bad. It may not be fun. It may not be easy. But according to Paul his thorn was actually for his benefit. The thorns (or perceived thorns) in our lives show us our weakness. They remind us that we are mortal and that we are not in control. The miracles that were happening to Paul and *through* Paul were not by his power. The rapid growth of the church was not his doing. Rather, it was the mighty power of God that was accomplishing these great things. In fact, Paul boasts of his weakness in order to focus even more on the grace and power of God in Christ.

Weakness in the eyes of the world is nothing new. God has always used the weak and the foolish to shame the strong and the wise. It is in the weakness of the cross that God has accomplished our salvation. What appeared to be a defeat was in reality the ultimate victory for Jesus. Not only for him, but for all who believe on His name. "For indeed He was crucified because of weakness, yet He lives because of the power of God." Jesus bore our sins on the cross. In our Baptism

into His name we now live in Him and through Him. His strength and His victory are ours. Just as Paul's thorn was a messenger of Satan, but used by God. Indeed, the very raging of Satan himself was overruled and used by God to achieve the supreme victory of Divine grace for us on Calvary.

Through the weakness of the cross God worked His mighty power to save us. He continues to work by the power of His Spirit to create and sustain our faith and our lives.

God reminds Paul and us, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It's all you need! God's forgiveness, His grace in Christ Jesus, is our greatest gift. Everything else is as nothing compared with the forgiveness of our sins.

This passage really is not about thorns at all. It is about grace. It sums up what Paul's entire ministry was all about. In the light of this passage everything falls into place. His calling, his conversion, his weaknesses, his trials and labors, his conquests and his exaltations. *All* is of grace!! The glory belongs to the Lord alone; His grace is supreme. The weakness of the human vessel serves to magnify and put into perspective the perfection of God's power. The greater the servant's weakness, the more conspicuous is the power of his Master's all-sufficient grace.

For us also, as we look toward our first call we realize that it is not about us and it is not about thorns, rather it is about God's grace. His grace in bringing us into His family through Baptism. His grace in sustaining our faith through His Word and His Supper. His grace in making us vessels to deliver His gifts to His people. Gunbarrel, OK..What a grace-filled place!!

Prayer:

God of the prophets, bless the prophets' sons;
Elijah's mantle on Elisha cast.
Each age its solemn task may claim but once;
Make each one nobler, stronger than the last.

Make them apostles, heralds of your cross;
Forth let them go to tell all lands your grace.
By you inspired, they count all else but loss
And stand at last with joy before your face.
(LW 258: 1,4)

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11)

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave His life for the life of the Church. Through the blood He shed on the cross, forgiveness and eternal life are freely given to all mankind. This forgiveness comes to us through the means which He has chosen for our salvation: Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Lord's Supper bring to us the forgiveness Jesus won for us on the cross. Apart from these means there is no forgiveness for sins. Yet, how has Christ determined to deliver His forgiveness? Through the instruments God has chosen for this purpose. Thus, our Lord established the office of the Holy Ministry for the giving out of His forgiveness. The man in the office is used as an instrument of God to be His hands and mouth. The question which faces us today is how can I be sure I am the one God desires to use for such a great task? The answer is He ordains us for such a purpose. Luther understood that ordination was something which God did and not man. He wrote,

But the blindness and stupidity of our minds has been put before our eyes like a cloud, so that we do not see such great glory. It is great honor and majesty, however, when one says: "This is the Word of God." I hear a man's voice. I see human gestures. The bread and the wine in the Supper are physical things. At ordination the hands of carnal men are imposed. In Baptism water is water. For the flesh judges in no other way concerning all these matters. But if you look at that addition with spiritual eyes, namely at whose Word it is that is spoken and heard there, not indeed the word of a man--for if it is the word of a man then the devil is speaking--but the Word of God. . . Thus the imposition of hands is not a tradition of men, but God makes and ordains ministers. Nor is it the

pastor who absolves you, but the mouth and hand of the minister is the mouth and hand of God. (LW vol. 5, pp. 248-249)

Paul writes to the pastors at Ephesus, "Take heed to yourselves and all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers" (Acts 20:28). God the Holy Spirit makes a man a pastor. While it is the physical act of men that a man is placed into the Holy Ministry, it is truly God Who does it.

Paul writes to Timothy concerning his ordination, "Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the elders" (1 Tim. 4:14). And again, "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:6).

In a few short months we shall be ordained into the Office of the Holy Ministry. Thus, God will put His hand upon us and shall show forth to all that we shall be His instruments for the Means of Grace.

Prayer: Lord God, when the day comes for me to be ordained it will be the hand of a man I feel on my head, but I know and believe that it will truly be Your hand by which I am ordained a pastor. When I think of this great and awesome responsibility I shrink away in fear. It is only by Your same hand that I will be empowered to be a faithful pastor. To this end I ask that You lead and direct all my life that wherever I go or whatever I do, You will be glorified. In Jesus name, Amen.

The Lord's Prayer for Call Day Day 1

Our Father who art in heaven, we come to you in boldness and confidence as your dear children for you have invited us to let our requests be known to you. As we look forward to call day we pray...

Hallowed be Thy name. As we look forward to being ministers of your Word we ask that in all our teaching and life we might be kept in truth and purity. Keep us from teaching otherwise than your Word.

Thy kingdom come. Your kingdom indeed comes without our prayer of itself; but we pray that it might come unto us also. Give us Your Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His Holy Word and lead

a godly life. Give us your Holy Spirit that by His grace through us He might bring your kingdom to those you will entrust to our care.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Your good and gracious will is done even without our asking, but we pray that it may be done among us also. As we prepare for call day we ask that You would break and hinder every evil counsel and will which would not let us hallow Your name nor let Your will be done, such as the will of the devil, the world, and our flesh. Help us to put our trust in You and not in what we think is best. Help us to accept with gratitude your gracious call.

Give us this day our daily bread. You give us daily bread even without our asking; but we pray that You would lead us to know it. You have provided for us as we have spent these last years here at the seminary. Help us to receive all that you will provide for us in the future with thanksgiving to You.

Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Father do not look upon our sins, nor on their account deny our prayer; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we pray, neither have we deserved them. Rather we ask that You grant them all to us by grace. So will we also heartily forgive, and readily do good to those who sin against us. Especially as You call us to be your instruments, help us to be faithful to Your call.

And lead us not into temptation. Guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us nor seduce us into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Though we be assailed by them strengthen us by Christ's victory unto assurance and service.

But deliver us from evil. Deliver us from every evil of body and soul, property and honor, and all evil desires. On call day, deliver us from thoughts of envy, greed, and resentment. Grant us complete trust that the call you extend is to your divine pleasure.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen. Amen, that is, Yea, yea, it shall be so.

