

“Call”

Chapter two of *The Preaching Life*

1. Early in the chapter BBT says, “We are born seekers, calling strange names into the darkness from our earliest days because we know we are not meant to be alone, and because we know that we await someone who we cannot always see.” (15) She then proceeds to describe seven people or groups she met while seeking:
 - The Roman Catholic church (15; her baptism)
 - The Methodists (15; the kind young pastor who supported civil rights)
 - Grandma Lucy (18; her cleansing baths)
 - Katybelle (19-20; vision of judgment)
 - The Baptists (21; intolerance)
 - The evangelizing college students (22; walking on air afterwards)
 - The rector at Yale (22; the role model)
 - a. What did she learn from each of these? (Compare your answer to the list at the bottom of 22.)
 - b. Name someone instrumental to your journey, and what he or she taught you.
2. Sacraments are classically defined as “an outward, visible sign of an inward, spiritual grace” (the catechism, *The Book of Common Prayer*). In the Episcopal tradition, as in ours, the eucharist and baptism are understood as the two sacraments mandated in the Gospels. It also recognizes five others: matrimony, confirmation, ordination, confession, and “unction” (anointing the sick with oil as described in James). The catechism adds,

God does not limit himself to these rites; they are patterns of countless ways by which God uses material things to reach out to us... Sacraments sustain our present hope and anticipate its future fulfillment.

Reformed theology sees God’s grace as active in, and vital to, all aspects of Christian life, yet traditionally shied away from sacramentalism for fear of superstition or magical thinking.
 - a. Where do you see examples of sacramentalism in BBT’s experience and vision of Christian life?
 - b. How sacramental is *your* view and experience of Christian life, and why?
3. Sacramentalism’s natural partner is creation theology, which embraces God’s blessing of creation (Gen 1:3+), our stewardship of it (1:28), and God’s plan for its redemption (Rom 8:19-21; Col 1:15-20). It sees God manifested in creation (cf. Rom 1:20, where Paul refuses to let pagans off the hook for moral responsibility), and creation as a good gift from God.¹
 - a. Where do you see examples of creation theology in this chapter?
 - b. Creation theology stands in contrast to views which regard creation as irrelevant—a distraction from the more important task of evangelism—or even a waste of time (as in strains of dispensationalism wherein the present world will be destroyed in fire, and is thus not worth investing in). Where does creation fit in to your view of Christian life?

¹ This is a perspective is also reflected to some degree in *Our World Belongs to God*, as well as in books like Middleton and Walsh’s *The Transforming Vision*.

4. After all the people she met, and another five years of discernment after seminary, BBT finally received her answer: “Do anything that pleases you... and belong to me.” (25) This is similar to a famous quote from Augustine, “Love God and do what you will,” and reminiscent of 1 Tim 4:4, “For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer” (where Paul condemns empty asceticism). (See also Gal 5:13-14.)

The answer she receives is tremendously freeing. What calling would you choose if free to do so?