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Congregation:	Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary (CRTS) Hamilton, Ontario canadianreformedseminary.ca	Ps 134:1,2,3 Hy 3:1,2 [after Apostles' Creed]
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Beloved in Christ, in your daily job and occupation, do you have an official title? Some have a label that speaks of what they do for a living. One person's title is general manager, another's is CEO. Someone else has the title of chief engineer, or perhaps pastor or principal. You just have to say the title, and you get a good idea of that person's occupation. We try not to get too hung up on titles, of course. But these things can be revealing.

It certainly was for Jesus. What was *his* title? We might answer "King" or "Lord" or "Saviour." But the New Testament answer that is most often given is "Christ." We're used to lumping the two together: Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus—any which way. But "Christ" wasn't simply part of his name. This is his official title, the designation of his office. It defines his calling, what it is that He does. It means that He's a prophet, a priest, and a king.

And so after we hear all about that in Q&A 31, the next question of the Catechism comes as a surprise: “Why are you called a Christian?” (Q&A 32). It’s asking: What is your share in the title and the work of Christ? How are you busy with the same calling that Jesus was busy with? This is the wondrous teaching of Scripture summarized in Lord’s Day 12,

Christ and Christians share an extraordinary triple calling:

1. **this calling in the past**
2. **this calling in Christ**
3. **this calling in the church**

1) this calling in the past: One of the great mercies of God is that He makes use of lowly people (like you and me) to carry out his purpose on earth. Though He is Almighty, self-sufficient, and perfect in all his ways, God is pleased to take into his hands weak and flawed instruments. Though God could always be a one-man show, He prefers a team effort.

We see this in the Old Testament, how God set apart individuals for three main jobs or offices. These prophets, priests, and kings were the original office bearers. Through them, the LORD wanted his church to be helped and guided in their covenant with him.

And this was a holy calling from the beginning. Think of Adam and Eve. They were created in God’s image and placed in the Garden. And the LORD didn’t create Paradise to be like a glorious all-inclusive resort, where his children could relax all day sipping cool drinks in their hammocks. No, they had *work* to do!

Adam and Eve were to be God’s spokespersons on earth, prophets who taught his truth to the coming generations. As priests, they were to be wholly dedicated to the praise and worship of God. They were a king and queen too—called to exercise dominion in God’s name over all the rest of creation. But even when they failed in the job, God didn’t make them redundant and say that He would handle things by himself from now on. Amazingly, God still wanted to give his broken people holy work to do.

So we see already Abel, Noah, Melchizedek, and Job offering sacrifices to the LORD—still in that priestly role. Later Abraham is referred to as a prophet of the LORD, and Moses is a prophet too. Among his people God always wanted to be revered as the only king, yet He was willing to give kings to his people when they asked. So He ruled them through men like David.

All these humble servants—prophets, priests, kings—were instruments in God’s hand. Each could go by the title “christ.” That sounds like a bold claim, but keep in mind that *christ* (a Greek word) translates another familiar term, the Hebrew word “Messiah.”

And a christ or a messiah is literally an “anointed one.” Because when God wanted to give someone a special job, such a person was often anointed with oil. This pouring of oil over the head was a symbolic act, one that spoke of how they were being set apart for a position and given abilities for the work. Like oil flowed generously onto a person, so God’s gifts would flow.

God is still the all-sufficient one, all-powerful, yet God wants a work-force. He wants his people to be busy everyday with doing his will. So He calls and equips us. Let’s look at each of these jobs more specifically.

One task was a prophet. He had the job of speaking God’s words. Now, we may think that prophets are those who foretell the future—like someone who tries to prophesy the end of the world, or who tries prophesy what the stock markets will do. But God gives his prophets a much wider task: speaking for him. Most often, God wanted his church to be pointed back to his laws, or to be admonished in their sin, or to be comforted in trouble. In the Old Testament God sends prophets almost constantly, because if God speaks, He wants people to hear.

What about the priests? A priest is a person who is dedicated to the worship of the Most High God. That was his life, his occupation! So if you were a priest, you could enter the special courts and holy places of the temple and handle the holy things. For day and night, the priests would present offerings to God. Sheep and goats, cows and birds, bread and oil—all of it given to God in heaven.

Among the other priests, there was a special task for the high priest. For he was allowed to enter, once a year, into the Most Holy Place. There was the ark of the covenant, symbolic of God’s throne. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest would enter this Most Holy Place with the blood of the sacrifices that he’d offered for Israel and for himself. This was another vital work, carried out by utterly inadequate persons, but accepted by God.

And there were kings too. An Israelite king had a full job description. He ruled the people of God according to the LORD’s just laws. A king rewarded good and punished evil. A king was busy everyday with ensuring people’s welfare, protecting them from enemies, and providing them with the needed things of life.

Don’t misunderstand this: in Israel, *everyone* had a calling, from the lowest to the highest, from the youngest to the oldest, whether you were from the tribe of Levi or from the tribe of Issachar. The Old Testament speaks of *all* the people being an assembly of holy servants. Everyone was a worker for God, which is why the LORD called Israel a kingdom of priests.

In Scripture there’s never been the idea that all the truly holy work can be left to the professionals like priests and ministers and theologians, while the rest of us are busy with our essentially worldly activities. No, all the work that we do, if it is done for the LORD, is holy work. Our schoolwork, our

housework, our office work, our work in the shed and in the shop—if it is done for the LORD, and in the LORD’s strength, is holy work. And all of it takes on a new meaning through Christ.

2) this calling in Christ: We said that our first parents had a triple calling. But they failed and we failed along with them. We were supposed to be kings and queens, but instead we became slaves under Satan. We were meant to serve as prophets for God, but we began to listen to the lie and spread falsehood. And far from being holy priests completely dedicated to the LORD’s worship, we’ve often chosen to love other gods.

So we need someone to do all that we should have done. We need someone to make up for all our failings. This happened in the person and work of Christ. See how the Catechism describes him as “*our prophet, our priest, and our king*” (Q&A 31). Jesus the Christ did his work *for us*, and in our place! All the good service that we couldn’t offer to God, Jesus did.

Most the Old Testament messiahs served only in one office. But Jesus is the greatest office-bearer, He is the ultimate *Christ*. For He is anointed by God with the Holy Spirit for a three-fold work—He was a true multi-tasker.

It all begins with his anointing, in Matthew 3. John baptizes Jesus, when “the Spirit of God [descends] like a dove and [alights] upon him” (v 16). From this moment on, Jesus was “the Anointed One,” the Christ. He was not simply anointed with oil, or with water, but with God’s Spirit. And there’s the affirmation that He receives from his Father when God declares, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (v 17). For all the people standing there, for John and the disciples, this confirmed Jesus’ identity. He’s the Son, He’s the Christ, commissioned and equipped and approved by God the Father.

So He takes up his work. In his ministry as a prophet, we hear him teaching the law with remarkable authority. He reveals new depths of God’s character, and He speaks about the coming of a marvelous kingdom. The Catechism emphasizes the volume of what Christ said—not how *loud*, but how *much* He said: “He *fully* revealed to us... [the] will of God concerning our redemption” (Q&A 31). God had long given his saving Word, but in Christ He has reveals so much more. The great Prophet comes to announce the full and complete message of grace.

Let’s appreciate how this proclamation continues! Here in church, by his Word and through his Holy Spirit, Jesus brings good news to the church. Jesus is still revealing God’s will to us. Through the gospel, Christ declares freedom and forgiveness for sinners!

So we need to sit at the feet of our great Teacher and be instructed in the school of grace. Christ says in John 5:24, “Whoever *hears my word* and believes him who sent me has eternal life.” With all

the instant messages we hear, the pervasive advertising, the constant flood of information, here is the one message we need, from our great Prophet. We can gladly sit at the feet of Christ, and receive his wisdom! So ask yourself often, “What would my great Teacher say about this? How does Christ’s Word direct me at this moment?”

Jesus came as prophet, and as priest. But He didn’t do his task in exactly the same way as the Levites did. Hebrews tells us all about this. While other high priests had to make sacrifices of blood and come into God’s presence once every year, year after year, Christ did this special task *only once*. And while other priests had to bring blood for their *own* sins too, Christ came as a sinless high priest. He came exclusively for others to sacrifice for them.

The greatest wonder of his work is that while other priests brought the blood of bulls and goats, Christ brought his *own*. He was both priest and offering! Through this perfect work, sin is atoned for. Christ died for us, sprinkled his blood for us—He has washed us clean.

And Christ our great high priest is still on duty. At this very moment He’s in heaven, praying for us in the presence of his Father, “Father, forgive them. Have patience with them. Father, remember that I’ve bought them with my own blood.” Christ opened the way to the Father, and He keeps it open.

Beloved, let me encourage us all to go through that open door. You’re allowed to enter God’s presence in prayer—so do so, praying without ceasing. You’re allowed to enter his presence in worship—so do so, and worship God with joy. For Christ’s sake, you’re allowed to walk with God daily—so do so, with confidence and peace.

When Christ finished his work as prophet and priest on earth, it was time to take up a new calling. Jesus received all authority in heaven and on earth, and He ascended to the Father’s right hand, crowned as King of all. Now Christ seeks to preserve his blood-bought people, to defend his sheep, to send rich blessings onto his church.

Maybe you realize something of your need for this upholding and protecting. We face many dangers from the dominion of darkness. In the world we live in, there is a surging flood of temptation and many reasons to despair. And when we look around, it appears the evil one is gaining the upper hand. So what kind of world will our children grow up in? How hard is it going to be as Christians in coming years? But Christ our King is on his throne. He is still on duty, and He is ever devoted to his people.

3) this calling in the church: So we come back to our calling. Let’s begin with your title, your label or identity. We tend to find our identity in so many things: “This is who I am.” And so maybe we define ourselves by the kind of job we have, or the family we’re from, or our character, or something else.

But consider this label: you are a *Christian*. In the extraordinary title of Christ we find our own identity and true purpose.

Appreciate what a wonderful thing this is! As we said before, God is the all-sufficient one, the all-powerful one, yet He wants a work force. So He calls us. He equips us. He gives you and me not one, not two, but *three* tasks to carry out: a triple calling! It's through being united to Christ by a true faith. Christ did the work that we did not, and now restores the project that had collapsed in the beginning.

See how the Catechism puts it: as members "of Christ by faith... [we] *share* in his anointing" (Q&A 32). We share in it! The Holy Spirit that our Saviour received we also receive. Ponder a moment what that means. We have the *same* wise and powerful Spirit who enabled Jesus to reject every single one of the devil's temptations, the same Spirit who equipped Jesus to minister daily to those around him. You and me and every covenant child is promised an anointing in this mighty Spirit.

And through Christ we have a high calling. This is what 1 Peter 2:9 says about the church: "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." I want to focus on this text because our triple-calling is all there.

First, Peter says we're a "*royal* priesthood." Someone that is *royal* is of kingly stock, part of a noble family. That's us! Because we're united to Christ the King, we're now part of his family and get to share in his royal work.

According to the Bible, the position of a king so often means going to battle. Says the Catechism, we must be "fighting... against sin and the devil in this life" (Q&A 32). Every day, from the time you wake up to when you close your eyes at night, you're involved in warfare with forces of evil that are vicious and real. These forces are as close as what's in your heart, and what's on the screen, and in the words of the person you just met.

So kings and queens need to think about what we're doing to fight back. Are we passive about the evil around us, that enters our lives constantly and that even lives within us? James urges in 4:7, "Resist the devil *and he will flee from you.*" He's a fearsome foe, but when we stand in Christ's power, we can resist him.

We're a royal family and "priesthood" (v 9). Or Peter also writes in verse 5, "You... are being built up a spiritual house, a *holy priesthood*, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Some used to be dedicated to performing worship at the temple, but now it's a calling for every one of us.

And see what kind of priests we're to be, in verse 5: "holy." Back in the Old Testament, the high priest wore a small gold plate on his head, one engraved with these profound words: HOLY TO THE LORD. It was a reminder to him and to all who saw him that the high priest was dedicated entirely to God's service.

We don't have that visible reminder, but we too, are a holy priesthood. This holiness can be looked at in two ways, negative and positive. Both are important.

Negatively, holiness means being separated from sin and from the things of the world. We are always being pulled to conform to it, to be and to act just like everyone else. But Peter says, "*Abstain* from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (v 11). Abstain! If you're a priest, you don't wander places where you could become unclean. You don't watch things that pollute your thoughts. You don't spend time with people who could weaken your commitment. Remember the engraving on your heart: you're a priest, HOLY TO THE LORD.

And positively, our holiness as a priesthood means that we offer ourselves to God. A priest gives not the leftovers, but we say, "Here I am, O Lord. Use me in your service. My talents, my gifts, my time, my thoughts—it is all HOLY TO THE LORD." Be a priest—not for two hours every Sunday, but be a priest at the jobsite, and in the kitchen, and at school, and on the bus, and in your community.

As Romans 12:1 says, "Offer your *bodies* as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God. This is your acceptable worship." Offer your bodies—like your hands to help a fellow saint. Or your eyes to study his Word. Offer your ears to listen to someone who needs to talk. Offer your mouth to speak a gracious words to someone discouraged. Offer yourself as a spiritual sacrifice!

One more time, consider our calling in 1 Peter 2:9: He has made you "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, *that you may proclaim the praises of him* who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Underline the verb "proclaim!" It means that God is still in the business of "raising up" the prophets.

In church and in this world, confess your faith in God with zeal and love. Confess him with an open mouth and a believing heart. As Peter will put it later on, "If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking *the very words of God*" (4:11). When we open our mouths among the saints or in this world by speaking to our neighbours, we do so for the living God himself. This is our awareness: "I'm a prophet, raised up by the LORD."

As prophets, we're allowed to be bold. We don't always feel very bold—it's easier to be quiet these days, not to say anything. Sometimes we worry that we have to say it just right, or we worry that people will take offense. But as prophets, we have an anointing with the almighty Spirit of Christ.

We may not be very eloquent. Our words might be halting and stupid to our ears. But it is God's will that we speak, and He'll take care of the response.

Kings, priests, prophets—an extraordinary, triple-calling! Maybe that sounds like a lot of work, like more than you can ever handle. Sometimes we feel poorly equipped to be the kind of servants God wants. Sometimes we wonder if what we do really matters—you're just a young person and a student, or you're just a mother, or you're just an office guy, or a tradesman. In fact, any of us can feel like our holy works won't amount to much. Most days, we don't feel very prophetic, or priestly, or royal.

But think about who it is for. Think of the privilege we have to serve our King. He *wants* us to do this work. He *delights* in this work. He promises to *help* us for the work when we ask. For we are Christians, followers of Christ. If that's your name, then that is also your task. That name tells us what we must be busy with, here on earth.

So don't become weary in doing good.

Know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

For it is God who works in us, both to will and to do for his good pleasure! Amen.

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