

**December 18<sup>th</sup> – Saturday**

**Centering Breath Prayer: Child of love...reveal my call.**

**Opening Prayer:**

*Holy Lord, your birthday rushes nearer and there are still so many things to do, yet I cherish this special time we spend together. As I read the scriptures and absorb the message, may my heart be open to receive your Spirit and answer your call. Prepare me to take my place within your kingdom and fill me with expectancy both for your upcoming birth in my heart and the call which you choose to extend to me. Open my heart to receive all that you choose to give so that I might, in turn, give it away to those with whom I travel on this journey of love. In the name of the Child of Love, so soon to be born again I pray. Amen.*

**Scripture: Romans 1:1-7**

**Key Verses: Romans 1:6-7: (6) “You are among those who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ, dear friends in Rome. (7) God loves you dearly, and he has called you to be his very own people. May grace and peace be yours from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (NLT).**

The concept of being called by God is often difficult for those who are not called to be pastors or in other clergy rolls. Though not all are called to full-time, paid ministry, we are all called to minister in some way or another. The first call we receive is the one Jesus issued to those he met: to follow him. Some answered the call and others did not, but over and over again he called people to follow. Those who answered the call became disciples. Some later became Apostles, the early leaders of the church. Others remained disciples. But all were called to love one another as Christ loved them and to serve one another in love. Paul writes to the Romans, new followers, or disciples, if you will, to remind them that they have been called to belong to Jesus, the Christ, just as you and I have been called. Like the Roman disciples, we have also been called to be God’s very own people. By answering such a call, Paul extends grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, not only to the disciples in Rome in the first century, but to you and me as well. But, we are called to more than just being followers. We are also called to serve one another and to reach out to those who have not yet heard the message or have not yet answered the call to become followers.

In order to carry out our call to serve one another and make disciples, we are given certain gifts, spiritual gifts. Paul describes these gifts in several places in his epistles, Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and 27-31, and Ephesians 4:7-16. Though none of us is given all of these gifts, we are often given several depending on our own particular call. Discovering which gifts we have been given and discerning the particular call we have received can be a life changing experience which is exactly what was intended when we answered the call to follow in Christ’s footsteps. Paul reiterates that “*God loves you dearly.*” He wasn’t just talking to the church in Rome. He was talking to all who choose to follow the call they have received from the Christ. It is not

always easy to follow. Christ's example is a hard act to follow, as they say in show business. Yet, the journey is a very satisfying one because we take the love of our Christ along the way and have a constant companion in the Holy Spirit so that we are never left alone. Being God's very own people is a special privilege, yet it is also an awesome responsibility. Without God's loving presence to sustain us it could become an impossible task. How blessed we are to know that God's love is as eternal as God's own self and how awesome to realize that God's love brought the Child of Love to show us that love through his life, death and resurrection, carrying us along the way to eternity. What more would anyone need? As the birth celebration rushes towards us and the world cries out for love, let us share what we know. God loves us dearly and wants each of us to join in the celebration of God's love forever.

**Additional Scriptures: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-31;  
Ephesians 4:7-16**

**Questions for reflection and/or journaling:**

1. How do I understand God's call upon my life?
2. Do I understand what my spiritual gifts are? Am I using them?
3. How does the knowledge of God's love for me impact my life?

**Suggestions for action:**

1. Phrase for your tree: **WHAT IS MY CALL?**
2. If your church offers a study on the spiritual gifts, consider attending it. If your church does not offer such a study, consider how you might help to get one started.
3. Consider your call. If you are not actively working to meet the needs of your call, see how you can develop the skills to do so. Always keep praying that your call will be clarified so that you are serving where and as God desires.

**Closing Prayer:**

*Loving God, how precious is your Son and how awesome it is to know you. As I travel along the journey of love today, let me continue to be conscious of your love and the call you make upon me in response to your love. Help me to respond to your call in a way which will be meaningful to those around me and to explore all the avenues you have given to expend the effectiveness of my service to and for you. As I continue to travel along the way towards the rebirth of the Christ Child, may I love as you have taught me to love and serve in a way which will reflect honor to you. In your wondrous and loving name, I pray. Amen.*