

Vocation Is Mission:
VOCATION AND THE COMMON GOOD
May 16, 2012
Spring Series
Dr. Steven Garber

"...A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and every one by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another..."

Martin Luther, German pastor, 16th-century

"[Saints] do not do anything extraordinary, they simply carry out their ordinary activities...The worker will become a saint in the workplace, the soldier will become a saint in the army, the patient will become a saint in the hospital, the student will become a saint through studies, the priest will become a saint through his ministry as a priest, and a public servant will become a saint in the government office. Every step on the road to holiness is a step of sacrifice in the performance of one's mission in life."

Francis Van Thuan, Vietnamese pastor, 20th-century

The following is transcribed from Part 2 of the spring "Vocation Is Mission" lecture series delivered by Steve Garber in the Restoration Anglican Church, Arlington, Virginia, on Wednesday, May 16, 2012.

INTRODUCTION – "Thank you for electricity"

Yesterday in my email box came a letter from Sam Owen. Sam and Lynne Owen are long friends of The Falls Church for whom we have been praying a long time for their work in Kenya. They had gone over to work with government and leaders some 30 years ago and are in the states twice a year. They go back and work in Nairobi with people in political leadership, principally with the Kenyan government. I had a meeting with Sam, who is a good man, a Godly man. He is very gifted and you can see why he would be very good at the work he does. He said to me,

"You know, thirty years later I am not sure it has been very fruitful. We have worked and worked and we are the most corrupt nation in Africa. We have prayer breakfasts and meetings with leaders, and the church has grown in Kenya, and yet we are the most corrupt government and most corrupt people in Africa. I wonder what it has all meant for me."

I still see him and think highly of him and he still works hard. His wife recently sent this email from Nairobi:

Email read aloud

"April showers bring May flowers.

"You should have lots of flowers by now because we read that you have had lots of warm weather. Our rains are here now and they are more than showers – daily heavy rains are destroying our already disintegrating roads and creating unbelievable havoc with traffic. It can take hours now to go what should be 15 or 30 minutes. We are all telling ourselves to make sure we go to the bathroom before we start out just in case we are stuck for 2 hours. I keep singing that children's song, "Have patience, Have patience. Don't be in such a hurry. Remember that God is patient too and think of all the times that others had to wait on you." Drainage pipes have washed away and now the water to our houses will be rationed to certain days of the week. But that is nothing to complain about compared to the dwellers of slums who have been flooded and have to walk in the rain and mud while we sit in a dry, comfortable car and many have never had running water in their little houses.

"Interestingly, even though the rains are here, we are still in a shortage of milk and butter from the last of the drought before the rains came. But we must say that the electricity is actually doing better than during the dry season for which we are truly thankful. In one of the groups I am in, it was suggested that we use something like turning the light switch on to remind us to stop and pray. Here it is with a deep

gratitude that I can say, “Thank you for electricity” if the light does come on. We just bought another chargeable lantern – so much easier to use than lighting candles – after I spent 3 hours trying to prepare for dinner guests in the dark. Of all the ways we spend money, I realized then that that was one smart expenditure. Duh – how many years have we lived here?

“Politics are warming up for the next elections. That means that people are leaving their parties and joining others or creating new parties. It’s like a big screen of grasshoppers to see who will end up with who for running partners and it’s too early to tell yet what will happen. Two of the men running still have to go to The Hague for trial over the last election’s violence. Sam is involved with some Christian groups who want to help the pastors of churches inform congregations on how to demand ethical requirements for their candidates. That will be a challenge for some churches that “rent” the pulpits to any candidate willing to pay a certain price for the chance to speak on Sunday morning.

“For us, we are concerned with the 10th annual Kenyan Prayer Breakfast on May 31 as we finished stuffing and sealing invitations today. We would like to ask you to pray for the many details that Sam is valiantly organizing. But more importantly, I would ask that there would be an anointing of God’s Holy Spirit to speak to the needs of this country. I don’t want just another meeting that runs smoothly. I want to see hearts changed and a vision given to Kenyans to make this next election something that will make a difference—politicians not bribing for votes, elections based on issues, not peoples and tribes, and that the needs of the common man are considered.

“We are encouraged that judges are being vetted and dismissed if there is any corruption found. But the police force is showing no reform as of yet. Parliament has just passed new laws that specifically define that motorists should not drive on the sidewalks, or meridians, or the wrong side of the road to pass others in a long queue, but what good does it do if there are no police to enforce the law?

“So please pray for our friends who are in the political arena and for us who are trying to strengthen them to do right.

“ ‘Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest, if we do not give up.’ Gal 6:9

“Sam and Lynn”

My son Jonathan, in his college years, decided to leave school for a while, and he spent part of the time on a ranch in California and then spent time in Kenya and in Tanzania. He lived on the border of these two nations with a Maasai family in a place where there was no electricity and

no running water and there was a school where he was teaching for a while. He was back and forth to Nairobi a few times and spent a couple of nights with the Owen family. He climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro before it was all over. When he came back I asked, "What was it all about Jon? How did this go? What did you learn?" In the conversations we had, one of the things he said very stridently was, "they didn't really need me, you know. What they needed was an electrical grid system."

THE COMMON GOOD

I want to speak tonight about vocation and the common good. We live in the Commonwealth of Virginia, most of us here. It is a word we don't ponder very often but we see it on insignias, our license plates and our driver's licenses, and we pay taxes to the Commonwealth of Virginia. But the word "commonwealth" reaches back over time and generations and reminds all of us of this vision of common good, of a common good, of a common life, and of a common wealth, that in fact we are in this together.

25 years ago five professors at the University of California at Berkeley with Robert Bellah as the lead author of their study took up Alexis de Tocqueville's century and half earlier analysis of American life. In his classic landmark study, this Frenchman coming to early America in the early 1800s asked, "What is America? How is it working? What will it take for America to be America and make it work?" This easily seems to be one of the most definitive readings on the *Habits of the Heart* that made America America and that still in fact makes us who we want to be. But Bellah and his colleagues took this question up and said a century and a half later, "What do we make of de Tocqueville's analysis? How right was he? What did he see? What is still relevant about what he wrote about then and what it might mean in the future?"

Maybe you read the book, *Habits of the Heart*. It was a widely discussed and still widely referenced look at America at its best with its best hopes. But the heart of de Tocqueville's analysis, and at the heart of Bellah and company's reading of a century and half later, indicated by the book's subtitle, is the relationship between the individual and the community. Twining through, beginning to end, is the idea that central to who we are and central to who we want to be and need to be, what will be required of us so that we will continue to be America in the future, is a healthy relationship between the *me* and the *we*.

"Individual and the community" is not a very hard idea to understand. Many of you have come from a dinner with people you know tonight, with a friend or spouse or larger family. David has a few kids in his family like we do in ours—tables full with people around them. You know that if one child, whether six or thirteen, decides to make the evening about him or her, it doesn't really work for anybody. It is sad raucous or grievous perhaps and there may be hard words said, but you know what happens when someone decides at the table, "It will be about *me* tonight." On the other side of it, what if David or I decide that "There will be nobody here except *me*. I am the ruler of the family. It will be about what I want to talk about. I will raise the questions and make the contours of the conversation. Nobody gets to be a *me* here." You

see, the *we* that I established is all that there is at the table. It doesn't work at dinner tables, on city blocks, in neighborhoods, or in cities and doesn't work in societies either.

Somehow this *me-we* relationship is a crucial one to a healthy society whether it is a little family or whether it is a city or a nation.

I've often thought about this while bicycling around Lake Accotink, near our neighborhood. It is a wonderful Fairfax County lake that I can reach by bike in 5 minutes, and I can spend an hour going around the trails. It is a beautiful, wooded place with some hills where I have to work the brakes and gears making sure I am not going to be in a mess in 25 yards if I don't move my gears right now. All that is part of my thinking through the challenge of being on Lake Accotink's trail. I have been doing this for a long time now. We have lived there quite a while.

I have noticed, over the last five years, that it is increasingly a challenge to be on the trail with other Fairfax county citizens. You know why? They are called "ear buds." In fact the biker protocol, the politeness of the trail, requires me to say loudly, "BIKE on your left!" For most of the time I have been on that trail, that signal has been sufficient. People move over a little bit and I go on by, always saying "Thank you." That is how I have lived my life with these people for years. Increasingly though I find that, with other people wearing ear buds, it is very difficult because more and more people don't hear me. They have their own music turned up so loud that they are only aware of themselves on the trail. They don't care if I am there or not, or want to get by.

The most grievous thing of all happened a few years ago. A family group was ahead and I saw them 50 yards away pushing a baby in a carriage, and I thought through what I needed to say. Loudly and politely I said, "BIKE on your left." There was no movement at all. I began to slow down a little bit and said again, "BIKE on your left." They were talking to each other and made no movement. I finally got off my bike, and the guy said to me, "We're not moving for you." I didn't punch him but in my mind I was talking to him for about an hour the whole rest of the trail asking, "Who are you? What do you think this is like? How could it possibly be that this is how you want to live in the world? Are you this way with your neighbors, your colleagues, and your family? How do you live in the world saying, 'Out of my face; get out of here. It is just me'?"

That doesn't work very well on Lake Accotink's trails, at my dinner table, in my neighborhood or town, or in society at large. There is something delicate and dynamic about this *me* and *we* relationship that is crucial for us to maintain. Common good, of a Commonwealth.

One of the partnerships the Washington Institute has is with the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust in the Pacific Northwest. They are a good group of people founded by M.J. (Jack) Murdock, a businessman, an entrepreneur, and inventor 50 years ago. He invented the oscilloscope. He created a company called Tektronix and made a lot of money with his oscilloscope over the next 25 years. He died tragically in a plane crash while piloting himself over the Columbia River. He had no heirs and in his will had asked his friends to do something good with his money. He

left \$90 million and they created the Trust in his name. Since then they have given away almost a billion dollars, mostly to projects in the Pacific Northwest.

I have a consulting relationship with them and am a Senior Fellow to the Trust. I love to work with them. Meg would say that when I talk about them I always smile because I like who they are and I like their vision. I go out there often. They work in all kinds of ways with all different organizations and institutions. They support Oregon Shakespeare Theater, a fisheries project in Montana, clean water projects and Lutheran Bible camps in Idaho, Young Life in downtown Portland, ministries for women in downtown Seattle, Wesleyan Seminary in Seattle, the University of Washington chemistry lab in Seattle, Gonzaga University in Spokane, and a Quaker college in Oregon called George Fox University. They fund scores of other institutions and organizations and believe all of these contribute to the common good. Even Reed College in Portland gets some funding from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust. They just funded a new building on the Reed College campus actually.

They are committed to Portland, Washington and Oregon and the well being, the commonwealth, and the common good of that part of the country. They don't have a sacred secular split in their view of the world. They don't have a view of the world that says "Our money should go to those who believe in the Nicene Creed," nor do they have a view that says, "Our money should never go to those who believe in the Nicene Creed." Most foundations decide to divide their funding one way or the other. But the Murdock Trust believes it all matters because they are committed to human flourishing, to the common good and the commonwealth of that part of the country.

VOCATION AND THE COMMON GOOD

One of our other partners is the Laity Lodge in Texas, a wonderful group of people, again, born out of an entrepreneurial person, a family member who was more of an inventor, Howard E. Butt. The Butt family began selling groceries in Kerrville, Texas 100 years ago in the downstairs of a little house they lived in. They sold to neighbors and took the excess to hobos on the railroad tracks. Over time, HEB became the most dominant grocery chain in all of Texas. In Austin they are sometimes called Central Markets. A friend who is a former Congressman from Texas, who lives here now, says it is the most fun place to shop in Austin. Their displays are fun, the food is very good, and they engage you right as you are walking in.

51 years ago the Butt family bought a ranch in the Hill Country, 90 minutes west of San Antonio. They bought it to provide a free camp for kids who couldn't afford to go to camp. It was called "Free Camp." 50 years later, about 20,000 kids a year go through Foundation Free Camps on the Frio Canyon in the Texas Hill Country.

Howard E. Butt Jr., in his 30s, decided he wanted to give his life to something he called The Laity Lodge. The first retreat they had there was one where a pastor and two business people came

together and talked about the work and life of the Laity. We actually convened a retreat at the Laity Lodge last weekend, and ours was the first time in 50 years that they hosted a similar kind of retreat. We invited people across the country to come as a pastor bringing someone in the marketplace from their congregation. We spent three days together. John Yates and I were the conveners. Bill Haley came along with others from Washington, Berkley, Long Beach, Austin, San Antonio, Houston, Dallas, Birmingham, Nashville, St. Louis, and Kansas City. From congregations, people came to try to rework this question of vocation and the common good.

A journalist there asked me, "Why do you care about all of this like you do?" It was not my question. Nobody really ever asked me that. I ask that of people in all kinds of places, "Why do you care about this like you do?" As I was thinking through what I would say, I didn't want to say anything other than the truth.

I found myself thinking about my grandfather, my mother's father. I grew up in California but was born in Colorado. My grandparents lived in Colorado all my years of growing up. My grandfather bought and sold cattle. Some of you in this room wouldn't recognize names like Roy Rogers and Gene Autry. If you are my age, you remember that much of what was on TV, if it wasn't "Leave it to Beaver," was about cowboys and gunfights in the OK Corral and stories like that. I grew up in that world. The idea of going to my grandparents' house in Colorado was pretty attractive to me from age 4 all the way to 17. I would leave California by plane, train, and automobile and spend the summer with my grandparents, watching my grandfather living his life among the cows of Colorado. I came to love his world and learned to answer his questions and name the cattle, Charolaise, Hereford, Angus, and so on. I was with him as he bought cattle across the state.

One time I remember going to a cattle auction in Cortez. The cattle auction is really a big part of life in most of America and we just don't see much of it in Fairfax, Virginia. But, you can go over to Orange or Harrisonburg and see sales and auctions of livestock. I grew up in that world and loved it deeply. At the cattle auction, the auctioneer was moving from one kind of cow to the next, from little baby cows, then 6-month old calves, and year-old calves, feeder cows, dairy cows with mixes of mamas with baby calves, and finally the bulls. The auctioneer knew my grandfather was very attentive to the market prices and was very good at things like that. In the middle of his auctioneer's song, his ringing out the prices, he stopped and said, "Wait a minute." He called my grandfather's name and said, "What are the prices on these cows today?" He knew that my grandfather would tell the truth and that he would know. My grandfather never gave me a sermon when he did that, and it wasn't as if he commented on it. But as a fifth grade boy, I noticed and took it deeply in and remember it years later. I think about my grandfather's work and I realize that somehow his own willingness to be a truth teller and take part in the economy of Colorado, to buy and sell and contribute and to be part of the commonwealth of Colorado, was his life. I watched that and became apprenticed to that in some small way.

My father was also part of why I began to think about things like this. My grandfather wanted him to go into business with him but my father wanted to get a PhD in plant pathology instead. So he went to University of California and that is where I grew up.

I didn't really know what my father did. I knew he was a plant pathologist with University of California and worked in laboratories and looked in microscopes and had greenhouses and things. But, it wasn't until high school that we had a serious conversation about what he did and why. I remember one night when I was 14 and for some reason he took me into his confidence and said something like this,

"I am not going back to the laboratory tonight, Steve. I want to be part of life with my four sons and your mom, and I want to be on the school board in town. I am an elder in the church and am committed to that. You know I go out to the prison once a week to lead a Bible study. There are other things I want to be part of my life, and I want you to understand that I am not going back to the lab tonight even though my colleagues will be doing that. There is a lot of pressure that I should be there tonight as well, writing another report, publishing another paper, getting another asterisk by my name, and getting my ranking higher and higher so I might make more next year or five years from now. You know I am just not going to live my life that way. I am actually going to be praying day by day that God will give me insight into the meaning of my life into the questions of my work. I want to be able to see what I am doing and understand how it all relates to each other. I work hard in the day but you know what? I go to bed at night and I wake up in the morning and my prayer is that I have insight into my work, into the questions of my work."

I think in different sorts of ways my father and my grandfather gave me windows looking over their shoulders and into their hearts, into the meaning of vocation and the common good. Probably eight years after that conversation with my father, he told me that if I wanted to watch him in his work I could do that. In college at that time, I said, "Yes." I then realized cotton was the major cash crop of California for most of the 20th century. Most people don't know that. His specialty was cotton disease and once a year he would host people who decided what kind of cotton would be grown because California was a one-cottonseed state for decades in the American economy. There was only one kind that could be grown because it was branded and sold globally as "California cotton." My father's job was to work and do his best to understand what kind of cotton was the strongest and least vulnerable to diseases, then give his reports to the cotton breeders and cotton seed developers who sent cotton to the rest of California. I began to have a sense that my father was part of a world that I never really quite imagined. Vocation and the common good.

Today we had a lunch downtown for pastors who were asked to bring a guest from their parish or congregation, including Bill Hanke and representatives from Restoration Anglican, The Falls Church Anglican, Church of the Resurrection, Church of the Advent, Grace DC, and McLean Presbyterian, as well as others. Katherine Leary Alsdorf and Rev. David H. Kim came down from

the Center for Faith and Work at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, and we engaged them in a conversation about churches, vocation and the world and how this happens in the context of the congregation. That is at the very heart of our work at The Washington Institute.

I remember several years ago when Katherine invited me to speak at Redeemer about vocation and I took the Book of Daniel because it seems to be an unusual story about someone's vocation. The Book of Daniel is a story of a boy who is taken out of his homeland of Israel, stolen and exiled, and taken to Babylon. The story begins with his decision not to eat the King's food and pristine fare, but eat vegetables and drink water instead. The big question was whether he would be healthy and strong anyway. It is a wonderfully interesting story of someone who masters the learning and knowledge of the literature of the Babylonians. He mastered all of that and seemed to be somehow at the very top of his class academically and in every other way. In the next chapter he gets picked out and steps in to a very delicate situation politically and finds that his life is on the line. Somehow in the strange mercies of God, Daniel has insight into the questions of Nebuchadnezzar, and he sees the meaning of the king's dream and speaks plainly and prophetically into Nebuchadnezzar's life. The chapters unfold one by one: dreams and interpretations; lions' dens; and writings on the wall. All this while, of course, Daniel is chosen to be the chief political counselor to three different tyrants. It would be easier if we were talking about the counselor to the mayor of Wheaton, Illinois or mayor of Colorado Springs, Colorado. Both are safer, nicer places to be. But this is Babylon, the most iconic pagan city in the history of the world.

Daniel is asked to be the chief political counselor to three different tyrants, all mercurial despots. What did they do in his life? The detail isn't there. But in light of what we know about Washington, DC, and what chief political counselors here weigh in on—road construction, military policy, agricultural strengths, and water resources—you can walk your way through what politics is about for everyone. You realize what Daniel is doing each time he is the trusted advisor to mercurial, despotic tyrants who want his wisdom to help them make sense of their own moment politically, socially, and economically. The backdrop to Daniel's working out his vocation is in Jeremiah 29 where Jeremiah writes a letter to the exiles in Babylon appealing to them to *seek the flourishing of the city, pray for it, build houses and plant trees, get married and have kids, pray for its flourishing, and realize that when it flourishes you will flourish.*

Jeremiah 29:4-7 (NIV)

"This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.'"

It is a strange prayer; it would be easier to pray for some place other than Babylon, iconic pagan capital that it was. Pray for it to flourish, and somehow the dynamic of providences is *when it flourishes you too will flourish*. These are hard words even to say. How would we imagine that might be the way it could be in history? Pray for a pagan place to flourish, realizing that your own flourishing is intimately bound up with its flourishing? In the Book of Daniel, after the lions' den, these dreams come with Daniels's own name on them. Even with his declaration of divine words to Daniel himself, chapter-by-chapter and dream-by-dream, he is perplexed and stricken. His face grows pale. It's not as though somehow to have these visions from God makes it all clearer to him. If you read the text as it is there to be read simply, it is as if he doesn't quite understand what it all means. The very last words about Daniel in the whole book are, "and Daniel was perplexed."

I actually take comfort in that, in a strange way, because as I watch the world and listen to the world, I find that it is a pretty messy, complex, and conflicted world to live in. It is very hard to make sense of who God is and who we are and how we are to work it all out in our own times and places. I believe deeply in the sovereignty and goodness of God. But trying to work it out in the particulars is difficult because it is so messy, and Daniel felt that way too. In the middle of all that, there is a place in the story where the writer of the Book of Daniel says he was reading from Jeremiah's scroll and the very words there are from the Chapter 29, as we call it generations later. And you know that Daniel was reading this text and that somehow he too was shaped by these words of Jeremiah as he took up his own sense of calling and vocation. "When it flourishes you will flourish."

One of my other partnerships in The Washington Institute is with Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. We have a joint degree we sponsor, a doctorate of ministry in, of all things, Faith, Vocation and Culture. It's a wonderful name they have given to it. I'll be there all next week teaching with them. Recently I was in Pittsburgh visiting with their former Chairman of the Board, Walt Turner, a dairyman and businessman. Anyone from Pittsburgh was probably raised drinking milk from Turner Dairy Farms. If you are old enough, you had Turner milk delivered to your door. His is a family with four generations of service to their city of Pittsburgh.

I had a tour of the Turner Dairy Farms with Walt. We walked through and he introduced me to the person who has been filling chocolate milk bottles for 30 years, someone pasturing the milk for 25 years, and the person who has been loading milk into cartons and moving them onto trucks, and the person delivering them to Pittsburgh. It was fascinating to meet the Turner Dairy Farms people through Walt's eyes.

He was telling me about his own sense of responsibility to Pittsburgh and the family heritage of commitment to providing safe, tasty products to Pittsburgh. They've actually won blue ribbons and gold prizes at the Wisconsin State Fair for the best chocolate milk in America and at the California State Fair for the best 2% milk in America.

If you like the drink Arnold Palmer, you will appreciate a funny little story about this drink mixture of lemonade and iced tea. Arnold Palmer was a native of Latrobe in the Pittsburgh area. Some years ago, while talking to Walt Turner, he said, "You know, I really like this drink. Could you guys help me put it out there with my name on it? You can package and sell it." It was a great idea and they concocted the drink, and marketed and sold it for quite a while. Eventually, with no hard feelings, Arnold Palmer went off on his own, and now you can go into any club in America and order Arnold Palmer. Turner Dairy Farms markets the same product "Black and Gold" now. I would say it is the best Arnold Palmer I have ever had.

Walt has a great sense of responsibility to Pittsburgh, a responsibility for his cows, and for the health of his cows. He actually thinks in terms of vocation and the common good. It's language he uses. The language makes sense of what he does day by day and year after year.

From Detroit to Wall Street are short-sided visions of vocation and short-sided visions of careers and occupations. You know, they never really work for the common good. It can't work for the common good. I know you probably were watching the Wall Street implosion a few years ago with our Federal Reserve Chairman lamenting. With open perplexity he asked, "How could they have done something like this on Wall Street? How could they have made choices so selfish, not thinking about everybody else in America?" They got rich. We could add that they may have bought houses on Nantucket and are retired by now. But all of us have to pay for it, don't we? And that was our Federal Reserve Bank chairman's lament after the implosion on Wall Street, "How could they have acted with such short sided selfishness?" It was against America, against the future of America, against the common good of America and against the commonwealth of America to do so.

Two weeks ago Wendell Berry gave the annual Jefferson Lecture at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. It was a surprising evening in Washington, DC, honoring a farmer from Kentucky who is also called the "most prophetic writer in American Literature." The Opera Hall was sold out, standing room only, with thousands there to listen to this man who I describe as a sort of "grandfatherly radical." Berry is almost 80 years old, but he just won't go along with the status quo. I think 30 year olds like that. They like listening to him. He called his lecture, "It All Turns on Affection." It's from a quotation from E.M. Forster's novel, *Howard's End*, about an industrialist, Mr. Wilcox, in industrialized England a century ago. Wilcox had a far-flung empire and makes a decision indifferent to him but with drastic consequences for a younger company employee; it ruins the employee's life. One day the young employee is in the street, haggard, anxious, disheveled, and yearning for something to make his life right again. Seeing Mr. Wilcox walking down the street, he is sure that if he can just say to him "but you see sir...", perhaps Mr. Wilcox would help him. He runs up to Wilcox, who wants nothing to do with him, of course. He is completely indifferent to this young man's situation.

Berry began his lecture with a story about his grandfather, a tobacco farmer in Kentucky in 1907:

"...We had been, for generations of our family, uncles and brothers and cousins, and we all labored on the crop for the whole year. Come the fall we'd planted, harvested eventually, cured, and then loaded it on the wagons. We met as a family late one fall evening asking, 'What money do we need for the next year? What do you need?' and we'd added up all the sums of the families involved and my grandfather took that sum into Louisville the next day with the tobacco crop and came back that next night with nothing."

Berry went on to say that the American Tobacco Company made a lot of money that year off of American tobacco, his grandfather's tobacco, and off of hundreds of other tobacco farmers in Kentucky. At that time, James B. Duke was the head of the American Tobacco Company. Years later, Berry was on the campus of Duke University giving a lecture. "It was ironic," he said, to see the statue on the campus of this man with a cigar in his hand and underneath it these words, "Industrialist Philanthropist." Just to take into his heart, what does it all mean? How do you do this? How do we do this in American life? Berry isn't cheap. It is not a cheap analysis. He's working together, somehow, ideas of responsibility in history and community and naming it all, "It All Turns On Affection." You see it all turns on "how we see ourselves in relationship to each other in our responsibilities to each other."

I do some work for Mars, Incorporated, headquartered in McLean, Virginia. They make M&Ms and lots of other things that you know about in this world, and probably a lot that you don't know about. I took some of their executives to meet Wendell Berry a few summers ago because I was convinced that what they want to work on are questions that Berry has been working on himself for a long time. We called our project "The Economics of Mutuality." The idea is that we are in this together. Mars is a corporation, but in fact Mars has a corporation's responsibility for those who grow cocoa in Sierra Leone. You can't just buy the beans at the best price. To be in this together for the long haul, to make money over the long haul, we have to somehow work with those who care for and grow beans in Sierra Leone. We actually have to care for the trees themselves, because if we don't care for the trees and steward them, we won't be making money 25 years from now when there will be no trees left. So it is a more complex bottom line that we are working on in this project. It is very complex in an almost \$40 billion a year corporation. At the end of the day with Barry, he put it like this with us, "If you want to make money for a year, you're going to ask certain questions aren't you? But if you want to make money for 100 years, you'll have to ask other questions." I think to be committed to a view of vocation in the common good you have to learn to ask other questions.

COMMON GRACE FOR THE COMMON GOOD
from cooking pots to rock extravaganzas

I think it's critical in our thinking through this business of common good to have a theology of common grace. The rain falls on the just and the unjust in this world. In Romans Chapter 1, it says plainly that God in His mercy, in His grace, in His sovereignty, reveals Himself so plainly to everyone on the face of the earth that we are without excuse. It isn't as if God hides in a cave or behind a cloud or hides in the Heavens. God has revealed Himself generously and gracefully to the whole of the universe to all of history. We could walk our way through the scriptures of making this case for God, by grace and by gift, choosing to be good to His world. Now when rain falls on the just and the unjust, it doesn't save anybody from their sins. I really like to drive on safe highways but they don't save anyone from their sins. I am grateful for an electrical grid system that works. It doesn't save anyone from sin. I like my wife. I am grateful that she likes me, but as good as her love is for me, it doesn't save me from my sin. Somehow in the best of theological discernment there is a distinction made between saving grace and common grace. Saving grace is what God does. It's the work of God in history in mercy, always amazing grace. But that's God's work in history and in your life and mine. Ordinary or common grace is what explains the rest of life to us. It explains a good, warm, wonderfully fragrant loaf of bread and those beautiful pink roses I stopped and smelled this afternoon on Capitol Hill. It explains my own love for growing flowers in my yard; I love the orange-yellow hibiscus flowers and the pastel purple, pink and off-white foxglove spirals that are blooming now. I long for them, but they don't save me from my sin. They are called common graces in the best of theology.

We need a robust theology of common grace. The prophesy that Zechariah spoke into the lives of the people of Israel at the very end of the chapter promises that some day, when the Day of the Lord comes, "even the cooking pots will be called Holy to the Lord." It's quite a fascinating image isn't it? "Even the cooking pots will be called Holy." You see, we can go into a very high-end kitchen store in Tysons Corner Shopping Center and spend \$300 on a cooking pot with red, yellow, or blue glaze. You can pick your best and say, "I'll pay whatever it costs. I want that cooking pot." But probably, you have been to other parts of the world too and you realize that all it really takes is someone with a little imagination and persistence to take clay out of the ground and work it, fire it, dry it, and harden it. In fact, every home all over the face of the earth has some kind of cooking pot. The poorest homes, the richest homes, the most modern homes, and most pre-modern homes have cooking pots. "Even the cooking pots will be called Holy to the Lord."

Abraham Kuyper was a Prime Minister of the Netherlands a century ago. He made this distinction between saving grace and common grace as good as anybody, and argues why the distinction matters to us, and why it is important to all of us. It is important that we pray for an outpouring, a generous movement of God in history, His saving grace to be seen and known, and to convict and bring to repentance and conversion. We realize that God is the sovereign giver of grace to this world, and we realize all of life can't be that way. Those who made this light over my head and my Mac computer and the Toyota I drove over here tonight—they

won't save anyone from their sins. Are they just chaos? Is it just chance? Are we to be indifferent, or do we say to all of these things and many more, "Thanks be to God! Thanks be to God for this, too"? "Even the cooking pots will be called Holy to the Lord." If this were a more high tech classroom, I would show you something right now but instead I am going to give you a reference for it and tell you a little bit about it.

Remember the name Harrison Higgins. Google him. Google "Christianity Today". [<http://www.christianitytoday.com/thisisourcity/richmond/furniturefit.html>] See the four-minute video of this Richmond, Virginia man's sense of vocation. I met his son years ago when he came into our home picking up my eldest daughter taking her to a camp they were both going to that summer. Harrison Higgins was his name. I was impressed with his son years ago. I was impressed listening to the father a few weeks ago. Harrison Higgins makes furniture and uses tools that were used 200 years ago to make the furniture. It's beautiful furniture. I wish I could show you. It's evocative. It is beautifully photographed. In shaving and cutting the wood, he presses in and polishes and he cuts again and molds and all of this. Harrison Higgins has a profoundly sacramental vision of his work. It is a word he uses. I think it is a good word.

I am going to play for you an account of something quite sacramental that may be surprising. I want you to watch this view of what sacramental living and labor looks like sometimes.

Audience viewed "Get On Your Boots" from a DVD called U2 - 360° At the Rose Bowl

I have been to U2 concerts a few times. I was at three of these in the 360 tour. I have stood beside a man named Jack Heaslip a time or two at a concert. Jack has been the chaplain to U2 since they were high school boys in Dublin. He has been the theological spiritual mentor, guide, and friend to them for their lives together. When he walks into an arena like the Rose Bowl or our stadium here or Charlottesville stadium or Baltimore's, across the country and around the world, stadium-by-stadium, venue-by-venue, Jack Heaslip prays for work, for power and grace of the Holy Spirit to happen that night. He reads the scriptures with these guys day by day and prays with. Before this concert at the Rose Bowl began, Jack was asked by Bono to lead them all in prayer behind the stage. In the video, we've just seen them coming out by the stage onto the platform. A few minutes earlier, Jack Heaslip prayed this prayer at Bono's request:

"A great deal of what I feel about this tour is what is going to happen to the people who come here who are going to be touched by this album and who already have been touched by the album and the albums over the years. So I thought of a Psalm, Psalm 61, which has pretty pretentious words, but then they were used by Jesus Himself about Himself so I suppose we can do no better than that really. And it starts with 'The spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor' and I felt that what we want God to do tonight is to pour his anointing. Now that's not just a dab on the forehead. That's a rich anointing of his oil. We're told the oil would flow down from the top of your head, and in my case into your beard, and down your front and make a mess. But that's the richness of God's anointing.

What I felt that God wanted me to do today was to pour out in his name that anointing on everything to do with this tour. Every body and every thing. We think of the band but we think of every piece of equipment and everyone who works that piece of equipment. Everyone who backs up, everyone who drives a car, everyone who does the catering, everyone who is responsible for technology. Every joint of wire, every plug, every socket, every light. So we ask for that anointing to be poured out by the power of His Spirit so we simply say 'Come Holy Spirit and rain. Pour out Your rule and anointing on this tour. Let nothing be an obstacle. Melt away anything that is not of you, so that your power can flow without interruption. We claim Your blessing and Your anointing because we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ.' Amen "

I've stood beside Jack Heaslip at a concert. Do you think his prayer was pretty good? Surprised anyone? Imagine that there is someone like Jack who has been there before, walking around, hands out to heaven saying "God in Heaven pour out your spirit and power in this place tonight." It's hard to somehow connect the technological wonder extravaganza we've seen here—space moving down through the cosmos, into the heavens, over Los Angeles, and into the Rose Bowl—with the prayer we have just heard here. But it ought not to be hard. Because, if in the day of the Lord even the cooking pots are Holy to the Lord, why wouldn't the *Rock Extravaganza* be as well?

One of the teachers of my life is a woman named Simone Weil. I'm looking at my friends from Reed College who know this to be true. In an essay she wrote some years ago, *Reflections on the Right Use of School Studies With a View to the Love of God*, she makes the argument that when we learn to study rightly, we see that study is what it ought to be before God, in service to the world. We are learning to "pay attention" she says. It's an evocative image. We are learning to "pay attention" to what? To what is really going on in the world.

She says that it is like in the parable that Jesus offers to us that we call the "The Good Samaritan." The expert in the law has mastered every detail, every letter of every law, but has missed the point of the law. That is the nexus, the nut, of the parable of the story. How could you be an expert in the law and miss the whole point of the law? It is a story of two people, much like them, experts, and religious leaders. They walk along the road to Jericho and do not have eyes to see a neighbor, a human being beaten and bruised by the side of the road. Surprise of surprises, a Samaritan does see him. Unlike the two religious leaders who for sociological, historical, theological reasons have been able to justify their indifference and have been able to say, "I do not see a neighbor," the Samaritan is immediately aware that this man before him is his neighbor who needs his help and he stops. And Jesus says, "So who was the neighbor?" The Samaritan, who always has the right answer, says, "the one who showed Mercy." Jesus easily, gracefully, kindly, prophetically, and probingly says to him, "Go and do likewise."

Simone Weil says when we learn to learn like that we learn to pay attention. She uses this story as a way into paying attention. She calls this Sacramental learning. Being the mostly-Presbyterian cum-Anglican person I am in my life, I would have to say I had a hard time hearing "Sacramental" like that for quite a few years of my life. I knew what sacraments were and they weren't anything else. I think it has taken most of my life now to realize that she was more in touch perhaps than I was, given where I have been, and that she could see that when Heaven meets earth, there's something sacramental. We see something about the way the world really is, about who we really are in the world, when the cooking pots are called "Holy to the Lord," and when Bono and his band and Jack pray for "the holy spirit to come in power tonight on this concert" on the wires and cable. You know it took 200 semi trucks to take them from city to city, and something like 60 miles of cable to set up for a concert night by night. The technology and the bureaucracy and the detail and the ordinariness of human beings doing ordinary things like catering and sound checks and ticket sales. It goes on and on. This was the biggest music tour in the history of music. When it finished in Pittsburgh last summer, it was the biggest tour ever in the history of rock and roll. It made more money, more people attended. It was incredible. *Soli Deo Gloria*, like Johann Sebastian Bach himself, "God in heaven come down here. Be powerful among us be present here." It is called "common grace for the common good."

CONCLUSION – “Only Connect”

I read E.M. Forster some years ago and wrote about it. I was taken by the first words on the first page of Forster's novel, *Only Connect*. Only Connect. Forster is looking into the industrializing modern world which was ours a century or so later. He realizes there is something about the fragmenting, the "'tis all in pieces" of the world as the poet Donne wrote. The "'tis all in pieces" world is in fact ours. He says to Wilcox and to the rest of us, looking into the modern world, which is ours to live in now, "Only connect." And of course that is what Barry was asking James B. Duke to have done in his own time. Or you and me.

My grandfather's life buying and selling cattle; night by night I watched him. I prayed beside him as a little boy because I wanted to be close to my grandfather and to smell his grandfatherly fragrance. I liked how my grandfather smelled. So, I got beside him as he prayed on his knees night by night. He would pray almost the same words; maybe there were differences but I don't remember them. But I remember the phrases that were his. One always was some part of the Lord's Prayer. "Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven." And, I think again about my Father's prayer, "I'm going to work hard in the day, but I am going to work hard having walked in praying, 'give me eyes to see what I am doing.' Help me to see the connection in your work, which is mine, to connect the dots in the work that is mine." Strangeness of strangeness, it doesn't always work out this way and I know this and you do too.

My father's decision, told to me when I was a 14 year old, had consequences I am sure professionally for him. Maybe 25 years later he and I were driving along a highway together in California, talking about his work, and he said to me, "You know, I would write this down Steve but I want you to hear something that my colleagues said to me at the university when I was giving an address about some aspect of cotton disease in the world. The chairman of the department said to the folks in the room, 'I want to introduce to you (my dad). He really knows more about cotton disease than anyone else in the whole world.'" And I took that to my father's grave thinking,

"I am proud of you Dad. I am really proud of you for the work you did and the life you lived. Somehow you didn't sacrifice other things in your vocation, your life with the family, your life in the community, and your relationship to my Mom, my brothers and me. You lived out a life and in fact were serious about these various responsibilities and relationships. Yet somehow, in the blessing of God on the choices you made and His hearing you as you prayed, you gave him insight into his work, which somehow proved to be fruitful and useful all over the face of the world."

Only Connect. You see for all of us it has to somehow work its way out into a way we live our lives which reflects the realities of who God is and who we are "on earth as it is in Heaven."
Amen.