

“Vocation IS Mission”

The Washington Institute,
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The Falls Church,
New City Commons Foundation,
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Part 1: CREATION-Why Did God Make Us, or Anything?

Part 2: FALL-The Fall Happens

Part 3: REDEMPTION-Redeeming with Jesus

Part 4: CONSUMMATION-Our Work in the World to Come

Part 1: CREATION-Why Did God Make Us, or Anything?
Rev. Bill Haley

Psalm 8

1 O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.

2 Out of the mouth of babies and infants,
you have established strength because of your foes,
to still the enemy and the avenger.

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?

5 Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.

6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under his feet,

7 all sheep and oxen,
and also the beasts of the field,

8 the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

9 O LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

David affirms 3 things in this Psalm

1. _____

2. _____

*“Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made // By singing—’O, how beautiful!’—
and sitting in the shade” Rudyard Kipling*

3. _____

“Genesis does not present the creation as a finished product, wrapped up with a big red bow and handed over to the creations to keep it exactly as originally created. It is not a one-time production. Indeed for the creation to stay just as God originally created it would constitute a failure of the divine design. From God’s perspective, the world needs work; development and change are what God intends for it, and God enlists human beings (and other creations) to that end. From another angle, God did not exhaust the divine creativity in the first week of the world; God continues to create and uses creatures in a vocation that involves the becoming of creation.” (Terence Fretheim, Creation Untamed quoted in Ben Witherington, Work)

TWI’s assertion...

“Vocation is integral—not incidental—to the mission of God in the world.”

Really?

“Priests and bishops are supposed to employ God’s Word and the sacraments. That is their work and office... Each shoemaker, smith, farmer and the like has his own office and trade, and nevertheless all are equally consecrated priests and bishops. And each with his office or work ought to provide aid and service to the others...” Martin Luther

“[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.” Bishop Francis Van Thuan

“If we are Christians we must spend our lives in the service of God and man. The only difference between us lies in the nature of the service we are called to render. Some are indeed called to be missionaries, evangelists, or pastors, and others to the great professions of law, education, medicine, and the social sciences. But others are called to commerce, to industry and farming, to accountancy and banking, to local government or parliament, and to the mass media, while there are still others who find their vocation in home-making and parenthood without pursuing an independent career. In all these spheres, and many others besides, it is possible for Christians to interpret their life work christianly, and to see it neither as a necessary evil, nor

even as a useful place in which to evangelize or make money for evangelism, but as their Christian vocation, as the way Christ has called them to spend their lives in his service. Further, a part of their calling will be to seek to maintain Christ's standards of justice, righteousness, honesty, human dignity, and compassion in a society which no longer accepts them." John Stott, Christian Mission in the Modern World

So....Genesis 1 and 2

God's Purposes in Creation

- God created the earth to reveal his character and create a place where his character could be revealed.
- God created people people to reveal God's self, steward his creation, and be in relationship with God

The **purpose of creation** first and foremost is **Revelation of God** through

1. Creation (Genesis 1.1, cf Romans 1.19,20)

2. Direct Relationship with Humans

- "walking in the Garden together" (Genesis 3.8)
- Communion "Being one with", Jesus' language
- Revelation 21...what does this sound like? " 1Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

3. Human Beings: (Genesis 1.26-27)

"If man really is fashioned, more than anything else, in the image of God, then clearly it follows that there is nothing on earth so near to God as a human being. The conclusion is inescapable, that to be in the presence of even the meanest, lowest, most repulsive specimen of humanity in the world is still to be closer to God than when looking up into a starry sky or beautiful sunset. Certainly this is why there is nothing in the New Testament about beautiful sunsets." (Mike Mason, The Mystery of Marriage)

“The Genesis writer wants us to grasp humankind’s unique place in creation. We observe this uniqueness in two foundational ways. First, humans are designed by God to exercise proper dominion over creation which is a divinely delegated stewardship role. Secondly, humans are designed by God to be His image bearers, to uniquely reflect who God is to His good world.”
Tom Nelson, Work Matters

The image of God manifests itself in us in....

- Spirit
- Capacities such as reason, spirituality, conscience, self-awareness, the will
 - "Authentic freedom is an outstanding manifestation of the divine image within man." (*Gaudium et Spes*, Vatican II)
- Marriage and child-bearing
- Relationships with one another
- **Divine function**
 - God works, so we work

Genesis 2.15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. (NIV)

“Work places us into the stream of divine action. We are "subcreators," as J. R. R. Tolkien reminds us. In saying this... I am referring to the sacredness of the work itself. As you and I care for our daily tasks, we are glorifying God in the work itself. When Martin Luther gave us his revolutionary teaching about the priesthood of all believers, he was referring not just to the fact that the plowboy and the milkmaid could do priestly or liturgical work, but that the plowing and the milking themselves were priestly work....” (Richard Foster)

“God could have placed Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and had everything done for them so they just sat around as food came to them, sipping their life-giving nutrients out of giant cups. This was not God’s desire or his design for His good world. Because God Himself is a worker and because we are His image bearers, we were designed to reflect who God is in, through and by our work. The work we are called to do each and every day, is an important part of our image bearing nature and stewardship. As human beings we were created to do things. In this sense we are not only human beings, we are also human doings. Being human means many things including being a worker. We have been created to contribute to God’s world.” Tom Nelson, Work Matters

“Dorothy Sayers writes, “The church’s approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to moral instruction and church attendance. What the church should be telling him is this: that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables...” (Leading Lives That Matter, Why Work?) Dorothy Sayers is not saying that offering moral instruction and inspiring worship services are unimportant...., but what we must not miss in her insightful words is the importance of the church in teaching each one of us that our work whatever it is-is to be an act of worship. Dorothy Sayers continues with remarkable insight when she says, “Let the church remember this: that every maker and worker is called to serve God in his profession or trade—not outside it...The only Christian work is good work well done.” Tom Nelson, Work Matters

“Put in general terms, the purpose of God’s call is for the people of God to worship God, and to participate in God’s creative and redemptive purposes for the world, to enjoy, hope for, pray for, and work toward God’s shalom. This is what it means for Christians to be in Christ and to follow Christ.” Douglas Schurrman, Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life

Cornelius Plantinga on Shalom: “The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Old Testament prophets called shalom. We call it peace, but it means far more than mere peace of mind or cease-fire among enemies. In the Bible shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights.” (“Educating for Shalom”)

Nick Spencer, “A Christian Vision for Human Flourishing”: “In the Christian view, humans are created, material, dependent, interconnected beings. They are made to be creative, productive, responsible generous vice-regents of creation....To flourish as a human being means recognizing and respecting these dimensions: enabling all to have a meaningful say in the direction in which their lives travel; affording opportunities for all to be creative, productive and generous; ensuring that all share in the use of and care for our shared natural resources; making it possible for all to contribute to our common fellowship. The word in scripture that comes closest to capturing this idea is shalom.”

“[Vocation] comes from a voice in here calling me to be the person I was born to be, to fulfill the original selfhood given me at birth by God.” Thomas Merton

Anything contributing to this *shalom* is somehow God’s work, and we get to do it...

God works, as image-bearers we work...it’s part of our dignity, part of our ministry, part of our worship...

And then....SABBATH....

A Collect on Work, written by Hans Hess, TWI Board Chair

“Thank you God for the privilege of working in this world you have created. Thank you for allowing us to share with you in the joy of creation and in the joy of creating. You also have allowed us to experience your new work of redemption through our work. So we ask today that where there is brokenness we might see Christ the healer at work. Where there is strife that we might participate with Him as a peacemaker. Where there is anxiety that we might experience your peace within. Lord we pray that whatever circumstances we find ourselves in today that we might see in them, through them and beyond them to your eternal kingdom. Through our work, do your work of making us like your Son so that your kingdom may come, and your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. We ask this in the name of our savior Christ Jesus. Amen”