

“Vocation IS Mission”

The Washington Institute,
in partnership with
The Falls Church,
New City Commons Foundation,
Trinity Presbyterian Church (Charlottesville)

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: THE FALL-The Fall Happens
Rev. Bill Haley

From last month: “Creation: Why did God make us, or anything?”

TWI’s assertion....

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

Gungor, “Crag and Clay” from *Ghosts Upon the Earth*

*Standing up from crags and clay
The peaks of earth
In full display
They break the lines
That break the sky
That’s full of life
Full of life*

*The chaos of creation’s dance
A tapestry, a symphony
Of life himself
Of love herself
It’s written in our very skin*

*All praises to the one who made it all
Who made it all
All praises to the one who made it all
And finds it beautiful*

*Soil is spilling life to life
Stars are born
To fill the night
The ocean’s score
The majesty
Of sculpted shore
Mystery*

*All praises to the one who made it all, Who made it all
All praises to the one who made it all, And finds it beautiful*

Fearfully and wonderfully and beautifully made

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 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

3. Human Beings: (Genesis 1.26-27)

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)

John Stott, Through the Bible: Through the Year

But The Fall Happens

What the marketers know....

Genesis 3

Three temptations:

1. God's word is not true
2. You will be like God
3. Take what God has given you and use it for yourself
(see Alexander Schmemmann, For the Life of the World)

The Fall effected:

Creation:

Direction Relationship with God

Human beings:

The Result was...

Gungor, "The Falls" from *Ghosts Upon the Earth*

*The fall, the fall, oh God the fall of man
The fruit is found in every eye and every hand
Nothing there is nothing yet in truest form
We walk like ghosts upon the earth
The ground it groans*

*How long, how long will you wait
How long, how long till you save us all, save us all*

Turn your face to me

*The light, the light
The morning light is gone
And all that's left is fragile breath in failing lungs
The night, the night
The guiding night has come
Uniting lover with his bride
More precious than the dawn*

How long must we wait

Turn your face to me

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. (Romans 8.19-21)

The Fall Impacts Work

Genesis 3 doesn't change the mandate of Gen 2.15...it just makes it harder....

Tom Nelson: "The bible clearly tells us that while work is not a result of the curse, work itself was profoundly impacted by the curse."

Genesis 3.17 And to Adam [God] said,
"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife
and have eaten of the tree
of which I commanded you,
'You shall not eat of it,'
cursed is the ground because of you;
in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life;
18thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;
and you shall eat the plants of the field.
19By the sweat of your face
you shall eat bread,
till you return to the ground,
for out of it you were taken;
for you are dust,
and to dust you shall return."

How? 8 Ways Work Gets Twisted in the Fall

1. *Work got harder*

2. *Work comes with a sense of futility (Ecclesiastes 2)*

Ecclesiastes 2.18 I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me, 19and who knows whether he will be wise or a fool? Yet he will be master of all for which I toiled and used my wisdom under the sun. This also is vanity. 20So I turned about and gave my heart up to despair over all the toil of my labors under the sun, 21because sometimes a person who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave everything to be enjoyed by someone who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil. 22What has a man from all the toil and striving of heart with which he toils beneath the sun? 23For all his days are full of sorrow, and his work is a vexation. Even in the night his heart does not rest. This also is vanity. 24 There is nothing better for a person than that he should eat and drink and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God, 25for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment? 26For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.

“Some people feel it because they have no idea where their life is heading. They don’t know what their career trajectory is, or should be. Some people feel it because they work for a nightmare boss, and every day is miserable. Some people, in DC especially, feel it because they came here to change the world, to make it a better place, but two years later feel they’ve

accomplished almost nothing. As they get older, some people feel it because they look back on a succession of failures, or missed opportunities, or misfortunes. For others it's the sheer struggle to make ends meet, working two jobs, getting up early and going to bed late, slumping exhausted into bed, but because of life's pressures, even in bed they find no rest. Some people, like Solomon, feel it because they have accomplished something, but then they have to hand it over to some idiot and see them ruin it. " (Matthew Mason sermon, "Jesus Renews Our Work")

3. *Work competes as a source of our identity*

4. *Work can become a source of misplaced pride*

The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11.1-9)

5. *Workaholism*

"One of the ways we make work and idol is workaholism. Workaholism is rampant in our day and often points to a deeper issue of idolatry in our lives. In this common form of idolatry, our identity becomes centered in and our entire life revolves around what we do. We worship our work and live our lives as if God does not exist. Work idolatry can be driven by our pursuit of the American Dream, of material comforts, of financial security or of our attempts to prop up a certain image of success about ourselves. Work idolatry is often concealed in the language of organizational loyalty and commitment and is regularly legitimized in a competitive work environment as the required pathway to promotion and advancement. Workaholism can be also be driven by greed, and rebellion against God. Regardless of the form it takes, like a black hole from which light cannot penetrate or escape, excessive devotion to work inevitably crowds out both our relationship with God and others." Tom Nelson, Work Matters

6. *Not working enough....Sloth, "the Sluggard"*

See the book of Proverbs (ie, 24.30ff)

"Instead of making work an idol, we can erroneously view our work as really no big deal. We make leisure an idol and become a slothful person. Taking a slothful approach to our work we may find creative excuses not to do our work or do just enough of our work to get by to keep our job and get a regular paycheck. We need to realize the seriousness of a slothful life, for slothfulness violates the very essence of our image-bearing nature." Tom Nelson, Work Matters

7. *Work seen as merely a means to an end*

8. *The existence of unemployment and unjust labor*

high rates of unemployment, and bonded labor, unfair wages, slavery, child labor

“UNICEF has estimated that at least 30% of Afghan children age 5-14 are working in some form (50-60,000 of them). But the issue goes far beyond Afghanistan's borders: UNICEF says that worldwide, approximately 158 million children between 5 and 14, one of every six children in that age group, are engaged in child labor. “Most of these children are working to help their families meet their basic needs; not all of them,” said Eric Edmonds, an associate professor of economics at Dartmouth College who advises many U.S. and international organizations on child labor issues. “I think it's easy to see instances of child abuse and child neglect and assume they're pervasive and they characterize all of those working children. But I think the reality of the situation is that ... most of those working children are doing so to help meet family needs.” (CNN.com, October 18, 2011)

So what to do?

1. *Resist the temptations of the Garden*

- a. “You are God and I am not”
- b. Trust God’s word
- c. Use what God has given us to bless him...be the steward, be the priest

2. *Celebrate the work we get to do....don’t curse it because it’s been cursed*

3. *Let the challenge of our work lead to our Maranatha (“Come quickly, Lord Jesus”)*

4. *Work hard....no sloth*

- a. 1 Corinthians 15: 58 Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.
- b. “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you” (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

5. *Remember the Sabbath!*

6. *Beware placing our identity in it...*

- a. We are not what we do...we are the beloved of God who get to participate in work and his work. Our jobs may change....that doesn’t.....

A Concluding Collect (from Jay Bilborrow, TWI staff)

To the Giver of new mercies every morning, to the Ancient of Days, we lift up our hands and our hearts—they are yours; take them, use them for your glory. In all that you have called us to do this day, whether to work or to rest, to go or to wait, to mourn, to laugh, to speak, to listen—in each of these vocations we worship you. Bless our efforts as we seek to praise you in heart, in soul, in mind, in strength. And though your kingdom is upon us and already in our midst, continue to show us the way to the radiant light of your presence, that we might in turn show the way to our friends, our family, our coworkers, those who strive with us, and those who strive against us. Be our God, that we might be your people. We pray all these things in Jesus name, Amen.