

“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 3: REDEMPTION-Redeeming with Jesus
Rev. Bill Haley

Opening with “Yellow” by Coldplay, and “Bright at Yellow” by The Innocence Mission

TWI’s assertion....

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

Really?

We’ve looked at Creation....we saw the beauty of the way God made things, and the way they were designed.

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
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**
- 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)

The Great Commission of Jesus is preceded by the “**Garden Commission**” of God...

See John Gilman et al, [Our Work Loves our Neighbor: Did Jesus Waste Most of His Life?](#), p28ff

And last time we looked at **The Fall**...everything good gets twisted....with profound effect....everything in the design of creation was derailed...but God did not abandon us.

A Parable of the town that loved Yellow

Tim Keller, *“The Gospel in All Its Forms: Like God, the Gospel is both one and more than that”*

“There must be one gospel, yet there are clearly different forms in which that one gospel can be expressed.

“If I had to put this outline in a single statement, I might do it like this: *Through the person and work of Jesus Christ, God fully accomplishes salvation for us, rescuing us from judgment for sin into fellowship with him, and then restores the creation in which we can enjoy our new life together with him forever.* One of these elements was at the heart of the older gospel messages, namely, salvation is by grace not works. It was the last element that was usually missing, namely that *grace restores nature*, as the Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck put it. When the third, "eschatological" element is left out, Christians get the impression that nothing much about this world matters. Theoretically, grasping the full outline should make Christians interested in both evangelistic conversions as well as service to our neighbor and working for peace and justice in the world.”

from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/global/printer.html?le/2008/spring/9.74.html>

Pope John Paul II **“The Gospel of Work”!**

The Good News touches **everything** the Fall touches

“God created the earth and put man on it to walk with him, be in loving community with each other, and take care of all that he had made so that we would live into the fullness of the image of God and become partakers of his divine nature (2 Peter 1.4). We sinned, and we broke and creation broke, and all was cursed with pain and suffering, decay and death. God sent his Son Jesus to break the curse and set it right and put us back on course. Jesus did this through his sacrificial offering on the cross and the power of the resurrection, and then sent his Spirit to so that we could then be the agents and stewards of the New Creation that he started. When he comes back to finish the work he started, all those who have lived in him and died in him will be raised to new life—in flesh, recognizable, perfect, and transformed, capable of relationship and in perfect communion with God and with each other. We’ll be rewarded according to our deeds earth with responsibility, joy, riches and honor, and we’ll rule and reign with Jesus himself in the New Earth that has some sort of continuity with the world we now live in. And we’ll enjoy and explore whatever adventures the creator of the universe concocts and that co-create with him.” (Bill Haley)

Jesus fully addresses work in two primary ways

1) Jesus worked

Mark 6.3 and Matthew 13.55

Jesus was a '*tekton*', a carpenter...broadly defined

"In the Gospels...a tekton [is] a Greek word that meant not merely a carpenter skilled in making cabinets or furniture but a designer, construction engineer, or architect. A tekton could build a house, construct a bridge, or design a temple." (Starbird, 2003, p. 53)

"It [tekton] can refer to a worker in wood, or in stone. I agree that this likely means Jesus and his family used both sorts of materials to build houses, since stones were the normal main material used to construct a house in Galilee. (Ben Witherington blog, 2006)

"More accurately, tekton is an artificer who could work in wood, fabric, masonry, sort of a general contractor or builder. Certainly carpentry would have been the most common undertaking."

Justin Martyr (died 165 AD), who like Jesus was a native of Palestine, identified Jesus as a carpenter and said that Jesus crafted yokes and plows.
(sheds nice light on Matthew 11.28ff)

"Our work is really God at work and Jesus made an absolutely God-ordained contribution to the good people in Nazareth as a carpenter" John Gilman, [Our Work Loves our Neighbor: Did Jesus Waste Most of His Life?](#)

Jesus dignified work by doing it...

Pope John Paul II encyclical, *Laborem Exercens* (On Human Work)

(see George Wiegel's summary of the Encyclical, Witness to Hope, p420-421)

“The ancient world introduced its own typical differentiation of people into classes according to the type of work done. Work which demanded from the worker the exercise of physical strength, the work of muscles and hands, was considered unworthy of free men, and was therefore given to slaves. By broadening certain aspects that already belonged to the Old Testament, Christianity brought about a fundamental change of ideas in this field, taking the whole content of the Gospel message as its point of departure, especially the fact that the one who, while being God, became like us in all things¹¹ devoted most of the years of his life on earth to manual work at the carpenter's bench. This circumstance constitutes in itself the most eloquent "Gospel of work", showing that the basis for determining the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person.”

“The word of God's revelation is profoundly marked by the fundamental truth that man, created in the image of God, shares by his work in the activity of the Creator and that, within the limits of his own human capabilities, man in a sense continues to develop that activity, and perfects it as he advances further and further in the discovery of the resources and values contained in the whole of creation.”

....

The truth that by means of work man participates in the activity of God himself, his Creator, was given particular prominence by Jesus Christ—the Jesus at whom many of his first listeners in Nazareth "were astonished, saying, 'Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to him?.. Is not this the carpenter?'" . For Jesus not only proclaimed but first and foremost fulfilled by his deeds the "gospel", the word of eternal Wisdom, that had been entrusted to him. Therefore this was also "the gospel of work", because he who proclaimed it was himself a man of work, a craftsman like Joseph of Nazareth. And if we do not find in his words a special command to work—but rather on one occasion a prohibition against too much anxiety about work and life⁴²—at the same time the eloquence of the life of Christ is unequivocal: he belongs to the "working world", he has appreciation and respect for human work. It can indeed be said that he looks with love upon human work and the different forms that it takes, seeing in each one of these forms a particular facet of man's likeness with God, the Creator and Father. Is it not he who says: "My Father is the vinedresser", and in various ways puts into his teaching the fundamental truth about work which is already expressed in the whole tradition of the Old Testament, beginning with the Book of Genesis?

“We believe this [Garden Commission] was given in the New Testament and that Jesus' carpentry years demonstrate it. Part of the whole gospel of God's love for the world is meeting people's needs for good shoes and good food.” John Gilman

Jesus dignifies work by choosing to spend most of his adult life doing it.....he was the True Human, thus, he worked.

2) Jesus' Redemptive work redeems work and gives it the renewed dignity of divine agency of creation and redemption with eternal consequence

“The first Adam was cursed with labor and suffering; the redemption of labor and suffering is the triumph of the second Adam—the Carpenter nailed to the cross.” Dorothy Sayers, quoted in Tom Nelson, Work Matters

“Work, then, from a Christian perspective, is not just viewed in light of the original creation order, much less in light of the Fall. It is primarily viewed in the light of the Christ event, and it looks forward to the completion of that event when Christ returns.” Ben Worthington Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor

A story of 216 S St. NE, Washington DC

ER doctors as an example...

Our work through the lens of.....

Creation: Am I creating with God?

Redemption: Am I redeeming with Jesus?

Teresa of Avila:

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Oscar Romero

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view. The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision.

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us.

No statement says all that could be said. No prayer ever fully expresses our faith. No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness. No program accomplishes the church's mission. No set of goals and objectives includes everything.

This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeks already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities.

We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest.

We may never see the results, but that is the difference between a master builder and the the worker. We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

Applications:

1. Connect your vocation/work to either Creating or Redeeming
2. Do good work (Make good tables)
 - a. “Be well, do good work, and keep in touch” Garrison Keillor
 - b. “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
3. Remember that Jesus Christ gives your work meaning. Figure out how.
4. Vocations can change
 - a. Jesus from carpenter to rabbi/Messiah
5. Welcome the “carpenter”, they matter as much as the congressman
 - a. A word specifically to us in Washington.....

A Concluding Collect from the Book of Common Prayer

"Almighty God, our heavenly Father, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work You give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of Him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen."