

WINTER 2011: GOD AT WORK
CLASS 1: WORK AS WORSHIP

Take a few minutes to rate the following from most to least spiritual, with 1 being most spiritual.

_____ Farmer	_____ Plumber	_____ Factory Worker
_____ Social Worker	_____ Mechanic	_____ Ditch Digger
_____ Pastor	_____ Small Bus. Owner	_____ Christian school teacher
_____ Engineer	_____ Missionary to Africa	_____ Surgeon

WHY DO YOU WORK?

We are good at telling people who work outside the church to be good at work, to have integrity at work, to give money away that they make at work, but we are not good (neglect) at telling people that God is in their work, that God loves their work; that God sanctifies their work, that God serves the world in their work, that God demonstrates His creativity in their work, that God brings redemption and restoration through their work, that God gets glory from their work.

Dorothy Sayers: "In nothing has the church so lost her hold on reality as in her failure to understand and respect the secular vocation. She has allowed work and religion to become separate departments, and is astonished to find that, as a result, the secular work of the world is turned to purely selfish and destructive ends, and that the greater part of the world's intelligent workers have become irreligious, or at least, uninterested in religion. But is this astonishing? How can anyone remain interested in a religion which seems to have no concern with nine-tenths of his life?"

Dorothy Sayers: "The official church wastes time and energy, and moreover, commits sacrilege, in demanding that secular workers should neglect their proper vocation in order to do Christian work—by which she means ecclesiastical work. The only Christian work is good work well done. Let the church see to it that the workers are Christian people and do their work well, as to God: then all the work will be Christian work, whether it is Church embroidery or sewage-farming."

We must connect the dots between Sunday and Monday; we must see how the claims of faith intersect the demands of work; We must see our work as the context for God's calling us to glorify Him.

YOUR WORK IS HOLY GROUND—EXODUS 3

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. Then he said, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

The ground is not made holy because it is a church or because it is on a Sabbath day or because Moses is a pastor. Just the opposite. They are in the wilderness, on any old day, and Moses is a hired shepherd. The ground is made holy because God is present there. Our work is holy because God is present there. There is no such thing as sacred work and secular work, only consecrated work and unconsecrated. What sense do you have that your work is holy ground?

In God's economy, there is such thing as the "sacred/secular divide" or simple privatization of values and religion. There is simply Jesus claiming every square inch of creation for redemption.

THE GENESIS OF WORK

God Himself is a worker—Genesis 1.1-5, 2.2, John 5.17

God works hard; His work is orderly and He sets the highest standard of excellence. The work is progressive and upon reflection at the end of the day, can be pronounced "good." God names each aspect of Creation. Because of His work displayed in creation, we know more about the kind of God He is (Psalm 19.1).

God creates man in His image to work—Gen. 1.26-27, 2.15

What does it mean to work as God worked? At a minimum we reflect God's image by bringing order, by being creative, by bringing beauty, by showing goodness and mercy, and by offering recognizable value.

Why was Adam's job not to be a priest or a pastor or something spiritual? Why a farmer/gardener/rancher? Notice how Adam's work reflected God's work—planning (farmers have to plan where to feed their animals, what crops to grow, etc.), bringing order (tilling the soil, clearing areas to plant, organizing the animals), offering care (caring for the animals and for all of Creation takes great care and goodness), creating beauty (Adam was to go into the world, order its resources to make it a place beautiful enough to reflect God Himself), demonstrating mercy and goodness (He had to have mercy to care for animals and goodness to steward the land), and offering value (food, aesthetic, joy).

Martin Luther: "God milks the cow through the work of the milkmaid." Vocation not so much about what you and I do as what God does for the world through us. God is not simply present with you in work; His is at work through you in your work. This transforms the ordinary and mundane.

God Calls us to work—Gen. 2.15

Most of us work out of duty, necessity, or desire, but Adam worked from a sense of God's calling (vocation). He worked specifically out of God's will. Therefore, work is not primarily about your fulfillment or self-actualization but primarily about obeying and glorifying God. As one business leader has said, "we don't get meaning from our work; we bring meaning to our work. Failure to see this introduces numerous distortions.

"God tells us that God have us a job even before he gave us a family. We were created in the image of God to be co-creators with Him. That's how we glorify Him. And that work was to be sublime, joyous, and sacred. Garden work, where we managed or had dominion over creation, was to be our primary mission."

Personally, I believe there is inherent motivation in knowing that I am glorifying God by changing a diaper, that I am representing to my kids God's mercy and grace; that I am imitating His character; that I am preparing them to respond favorably to God's gifts, and that in the very moment of getting my hands dirty in that diaper, I can be certain beyond the shadow of a doubt that I am following God's will for my life.

God Blesses our Work—Psalm 90.17, Col. 3.17-23