

IN DEPTH BIBLE STUDY: SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS

CLASS 17 and POWER POINT 17:

VOCATION: THE SPIRITUALITY OF ORDINARY LIFE

The MASKS of GOD:

1. Our relationship with our neighbor is determined by GW, which are only made possible by God working through us. L in fact displaces morality from the theoretical and overly theological (Philosophical), bringing it down to human life. Certainly human beings still sin in vocation. We violate God's law and neglect our responsibilities to love and serve others selflessly in our works and offices. Though we resist God's project of working through us, there is something about vocation itself that makes good things happen to others in spite of ourselves.
2. As Wingren shows there is a conflict and irony between our generally selfish motivations and the way the masked God works in vocation:
3. The vocation of marriage itself causes selfish human beings to care for each other and support each other more than they would of their own. The vocation of parenthood causes normally selfish adults to sacrifice their own needs for the well-being of their children. And this is done not as a legalistic obligation, but as something their parents want to do, and they do spontaneously, for their children. By the same token, the owner of a company may have no interest whatsoever in loving his neighbor and serving others. His sole motivation may be greed. And yet, because of his vocation, he manages to give jobs to his employees so they can support their families. His company provides products other people need or enjoy. Thus making him inadvertently a blessing to others. Our own sinful desires don't thwart God's work in vocation.
4. How do we know our vocation? And strictly speaking forcing children and pressuring them to 'decide' what they want to do when they grow up—a vocation is not something we choose for ourselves. Rather it is given by God who calls us to a particular work or station. God gives each person unique skills, inclinations and talents. He puts each person in a unique set of external situations which are understood of having been providentially arranged by God. Since vocation is not self-chosen, it can be known too through the actions of others. Getting offered a job, elected to office or finding someone who wants to marry you, are clues to vocation.
5. A vocation is the place where I currently occupy. A person may be in a 'dead-end' job, but may have higher ambitions, but for the moment, that job however humble, is their vocation. Flipping burgers, cleaning hotel rooms, emptying bed pans, all have dignity as vocation, spheres of expressing love of neighbor through selfless acts where God is masked. Perhaps later, another vocation will present itself. Vocation is not in future job descriptions, but in the here and now. Nor can a person use the excuse of not having a vocation for marriage for getting a divorce or claim not having a vocation for parenthood to dump childbearing responsibilities. If you are married and have children that's your vocation.
6. Vocations are multiple. Any given person has lots of vocations; I'm a husband serve my wife, a father, serve my children, a grandfather, serve my grandchild, a son, serving still living parents, an employer serves and employee serves their employers, a citizen serves their country. Notice how a person at a particular job can both be a master, charged with supervising subordinates and at the same time, a servant, answerable to superiors, whether CEO's or stock

holders/voter's. Leadership and submission may both be called for, as the different vocations make their claims. The doctrine of vocation sorts out and gives dignity and significance to each of the roles we're asked to play.

ACTING IN AND OUT OF, VOCATION

7. Different vocations have their own kinds of authority and spheres of action and they operate out of different rules. It would be the grossest immorality to ask a stranger to take off their clothes and cut them open with a knife, but it's OK for the vocation of Dr. Having sex outside of marriage is immoral, but inside it is a great thing for the vocation of marriage.
8. When someone injure us we want to take revenge, but it is forbidden by Scripture. Punishing someone with fines, execution, jail, following shoot outs or speeding fines is not our vocation. This is the vocation of police officers, judges and the rest of the legal system. "Do not take revenge my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,'" says the Lord. (Romans 12:19). Rather the next verses call us to forgive those who wrong us feeding our enemies when they're hungry and overcoming good with evil. (Romans 12:20-21). But this feeds right into the role of earthly government for we are to submit to them; "for there is no authority except that which God has established." (Romans 13:1). The earthy ruler is "God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment to the wrong doer." Revenge is God's job, not ours. God works through earthly authorities/vocations, His "agents" who vocation involves bearing the "sword." (Romans 13)
9. A major controversy in Luther's day, could a person be a judge, executioner or soldier. After all, the Bible says, "You shall Not Kill," A judge may have to apply the death penalty, and an executioner carry it out. And soldiers in battle are called to kill-not forgive-their enemies. Luther said that it's true that a Christian should not take another's life. God does have that authority. He does through the lawful, vocation of judges, executioners and soldiers, In the treatise, "*Whether Soldiers Too Can Be Saved*," (1526), Luther concludes that being a soldier is a way of serving/loving their neighbor. More on this the next class, class 18!