

IN DEPTH BIBLE STUDY: SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS

CLASS 23 and POWER POINT 23:

LIVING IN TWO KINGDOMS: The Sacred and the Secular:

CHRISTIANITY AND CULTURE:

IMPLICATIONS OF THE TWO KINGDOMS (TK):

1. Christians, he said, should suffer for their faith following the cross of Christ, rather than defend their faith through violence. Faith is a gift of God, the work of the Holy Spirit operating through the means of grace. It cannot be imposed on anyone through some act of the Sword.
2. The secular ruler on the other hand does use the sword. The lawful, secular authorities---not the church may wage war, coerce obedience, and punish wrongdoers. The secular authorities may not, however, tell pastors what to preach or otherwise interfere with the office of The Word. The need and should protect the church as the church will not protect itself.
3. Confusion of the kingdoms come when the earthly kingdom tries to wrestle away the workings of the spiritual kingdom. Before EV became a Christian, he listened to a minister argue that the solution to the crime problem is to release all convicted criminals from prison. Jesus said that, "He came to release the captives," didn't he? If we believed the Bible we would take it literally. If we emptied our prisons, the murderers and robbers would be so moved that they would be reformed. Even at the time, this proposal seemed naïve. EV saw this as confusing the TK.
4. The earthly kingdom exists to carry out the law, the spiritual to carry out forgiveness. A judge must execute justice, not the unconditional mercy found only in the G. To be sure, lenience is possible in the judicial system, under certain conditions, but the legal system cannot simply forgive criminals. Christ, of course, can! A criminal may repent, turn to Christ and receive full forgiveness and acceptance in the church. But a conversion does not exempt a criminal from being punished. ("Christ forgave your debt, but one still has a debt to society")
5. The kingdoms are confused when earthly authorities presume to grant spiritual benefits. Projects that claim to solve all of humanities' problems, reform human nature, and eliminate the effects of sin, all through human engineering, even well intentioned can be dangerous. When humans set up schemes for heaven on earth, they come closer to setting up hell!
6. This is true of the Egalitarianism of the French Revolution, the state worship of fascism, and every demagogue. Human governments are limited, prone to fail, and stained by sin. They are realms of human and divine service, but can NOT be heaven. The only way to heaven is the cross of Christ. The church does not depend on prestige, rhetorical manipulation and human designed programs. All it has is the Word and Sacraments, which seem weak compared to TOG, but in fact carry the life changing power of the Holy Spirit.
7. The Church, as Christians make up the church is to be otherworldly focused on the transcendent reality of God's spiritual kingdom, His reign in the human heart and eternal life. Yet Christians are to be engaged in the world through their vocation, uphold God' law and play their part in God's gracious control of all. Again, both poles the paradox are to be maintained. Believers

who retreat into a mystical revelry, ignoring their responsibilities to serve their neighbors and to act in the world, are neglecting the claims of the earthly kingdom. Religious believers who reject the supernatural claims of faith in favor of social activism and trust in social progress neglect the claims of the spiritual kingdom.

8. Both Kingdoms exist now at the same TIME! Not as future realities as if the benefit of eternal life were only after death. Or if social morality were only for the future withering away of the state. Every Christian is a citizen of TK simultaneously and must function both spiritually and in the world. The Christian lives in tension, often in conflict and Satan confuses both realms. God is sovereign over all He made the TK, Church and State, believer, non-believer the secular and the sacred.

EVERYDAY SPIRITUALITY:

9. "A Christian lives in vocation and the church," observes Wingren. Vocation is the concrete form of the L and the Church the concrete form of the G. Both are essential to a believer's life. The person who knows both faith and G and active service in the world that is someone who lives consciously in both kingdoms at once. They have a spiritual balance, in which the sacred/secular, the morality/freedom have a place.
10. Luther describes the ordinary person of humble occupation who knows where he stands in the TK. *"As long as he (a shoe maker or black smith) clings to these two, to the Word and faith by God by which the heart is made clean, and to the word of understanding which teaches him how to act toward his neighbor or his station in life, everything is clean to him, even if his hands and his whole body he deals with nothing, but dirt."*
11. The grimy workman is clean in his heart, through faith in Christ. Conversely, everything in his grimy world is clean to him, since this too is part of God's Kingdom to which they have been called.
12. L wrote 2 theological masterpieces that carry seemingly contradictory titles: *"The Bondage of the Will,"* which emphasizes our slavery to sin, our inability to save ourselves, and our utter dependence on the state of God; and *"The Freedom of the Christian,"* in which he explores the utter freedom opened up by faith in Christ, the latter book sets forth these two paradoxical theses; *"A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all."*
13. The spiritual K is one of perfect freedom in which kings and peasants, rich and poor and men and women of all culture and vocations are equal before Christ. They are free from the demands of the L and the world. Yet they live in the earthly kingdom and they freely set aside their spiritual freedom for a life of service. Christians voluntarily serve their neighbors subjugating their own interests for the good of others, living out vocation in good works for others.
14. We often expect a highly spiritual life to include mystical reverence and superhuman virtue or the possession of a supernatural power that overcomes obstacles. The spiritual life turns out to be rather ordinary—on the surface. It involves the universal experiences of forming relationships, marrying, struggling with problems, and working. The doctrine of the TK is that God is hidden in everyday life. Thus it is not moments of transcendent ecstasy that we are "spiritual." Human relationships are spiritual. The pleasure of being so caught up with someone you love that you forget yourself in marriage is a high and holy experience! So is child-raising!