

### Sermon #3: What Am I Called to do in this World?

Introduction:

- Welcome, Sermon Series Sunday Worship, Monday Work (connection).
- **Job Title:** Image Bearers of God. . . **Job Description:** Partner w/ God **as rulers** (Kings/Queens) over Creation. Rule is lived out through our work. By
  - **Developing Social World** (families, neighborhoods, communities)
  - **Developing Natural World** (shape, make, develop, program)
  - **Do it in way that help creation in general, humanity in particular, to thrive and flourish.**
- Drill down deeper how this job gets lived out for each of us personally.
- Because think about it. . . there are over 7 billion people on earth. Done pretty good job of being fruitful and multiplying.

But one striking thing about humanity is how different we all are – unique, diverse, etc.

- So this how profound implications **for how** we bear God's image (God's character/Likeness) through our work.
- Because each one of us will bring something different, distinctive, unlike anyone else to this role of ruling.
- The ecosystem of humanity is complex and multicultural – **and we need each other** – because each reflects a unique aspect of who God is and contributes to the whole of humanity and the world.

**ILL:** *Interconnectedness of writing sermon on computer and drinking a cup of coffee.*

**Q:** Could you imagine if I tried to make everything myself?

- The point is that developing a civilization isn't a Wild West proposition. . . with every man out for himself.
- Instead it's a web of billions and billions of people all working together in the spirit of collaboration and interdependency – each contributing something **unique**.

Ancient Christian writers described this idea using words like **Vocation and Calling**.

**Vocation:** God's invitation to participate in the extraordinary work of creation and redemption. Vocation begins when we say 'yes' to God's invitation to partner with Him in the work of ruling the world, as humans were originally designed to do. But also bring healing in those places in the world that has been damaged by the effects of human sin.

**Calling:** The alignment of between who you uniquely are and what God created you to do.. how you unique contribute to this vocation.

- We often hear 'calling' as something related to church and ministry. "I was called to the ministry".

- But these ancient Christian writers believed that God calls not just Pastors and missionaries. . .but doctors, lawyers, artist, stay at home parents, teachers, baristas and even bankers (***though not sure about that last one ☺***).

They challenged the whole sacred/secular divide. Which is this erroneous idea that:

- some things are sacred or spiritual, and they matter to God,
- but other things are secular or physical, and by implication don't matter as much to God.

The problem is that erroneous idea is still believed many Christians today. They live with this divide and see **MOST OF THEIR LIFE as SECULAR.**

- But think about it. . .the spiritual stuff is a dinky slice of the pie – going to church, praying, reading the Bible, sharing your faith. What % of those things add up to in our typical week? Maybe 5%?
- That meant that 95% of our lives is spent on secular endeavors – grocery shopping or walking the dog or cutting your lawn or eating a burrito (***and feeling bloated afterwards ☺***).

But that is the stuff of everyday life.

- That leaves many of us feeling frustrated because we think that what we do Monday-Friday is meaningless and pointless and doesn't really matter in in the eternal scheme of things.
- Some even feel guilty, because even though their job as an:
  - IT specialist
  - A nurse
  - A public school teacher
- Isn't spiritual. . .they really enjoy it. . . . and are proud of what they do.
  - And every time they come home from work they feel this nagging sense of shame because they enjoy it so much –
  - but it's not something that will quote '*winning others to Jesus*'.

However, this entire paradigm of sacred and secular is seriously out of whack. And not only is it untrue, but also dangerous. So lets look at this morning.

Let's begin by talking about the word **Spiritual**.

**Q:** Did you know that this word is found NOWHERE in the Hebrew Bible (OT)???

Do you know why? Because for the Hebrew people, **all of life was spiritual!!**

You have probably noticed this if you've ever tried to read through the Bible. Get to , Leviticus and you read laws about:

- How to purify yourself when your preparing to go in the temple
- How to make a sacrifice
- What kind of animal to sacrifice

- Laws about showing forgiveness, justice, and mercy

But, right beside these laws, there are also laws about:

- How to treat a skin disease
- What kind of material to use when you're making clothes.
- What to do if you have a mold infestation in your house.

**Q:** Why? Why would God put all this – hundreds and hundreds of laws – in the Bible???

It's almost like **ALL of it Matters** to God!!

This way of looking at life continues all the way into the NT.

- In fact, the word **spiritual** does come up until you get to the Paul's letters.
- He uses it as a way to describe how followers of Jesus should live their lives
- But the word, literally means to be "*animated by and infused with God's HOLY SPIRIT!*" To allow the Spirit to influence every area of life.

ILL: Compare it to the effect alcohol has on a person when it's consumed in large quantities. It controls everything from:

- How we speak
- Things we say
- How we treat others
- How we conduct ourselves in public, things we believe.

So, Paul says, followers of Jesus should be so FILLED with the Spirit of God that He has influence over every aspect of our lives.

**THAT**, Paul says, is what it means to be *spiritual*.

So if you were to ask the writers of Scripture, if you would have asked them "How's your **spiritual life** going?" They would have looked at you rather confused.

My guess is they would have asked, "*What do you mean my spiritual life? All of my life is spiritual!!*"

**Q:** So then how did followers of Jesus go from understanding that "*everything is spiritual*" to this flat, anemic, two dimensional world way of thinking??

Well, we can blame it on the Greeks

Let me give you a little history. Don't worry, it won't take long☺.

- Goes back to the early Greek philosophers, specifically Plato (Pic).
- He taught that there was a spiritual world (more important) and a physical world (less important), and these were TWO COMPLETELY SEPARATE PLACES.
- This was the predominant way of thinking in the Roman world time of Jesus.

- Now, when the church began all the early followers of Jesus were Jewish. They were deeply shaped by the worldview that Planet Earth - despite all its problems and imperfections - was nevertheless 'home'.
- And the great Jewish hope wasn't that God was going to come and rescue and take them someplace else (to some spiritual world called heaven).
- Their hope was resurrection.
  - Physical, Bodily
  - Flesh and blood
  - Dirt under your fingernails. . . resurrection.
- The ongoing hope for the Jewish people was that God would not give up on them or this physical planet, but would one day return to **rescue and restore it**. . .set them, set all things right. . . so they could once live as meant live, ruler of world.
- It's why, as read book Acts, the central message of those early followers was **GOD HAS RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD**. The resurrection of Jesus was sign, signal, starting gun going off that God's cosmic rescue/ restoration project was **NOW FULLY UNDERWAY** and we can join him in it.

But as church spread out from Jerusalem, to cities like:

- Philippi
- Corinth
- and then Athens – Plato's hometown-
- and non Jewish people became the majority population within the church
- this platonic, dualistic, sacred/secular way of thinking began to set in

Which played out, when it comes to work, in statements like: “*Well, if you were really a godly person, if you truly wanted to serve the Lord, you'd leave your job and become:*

- *a nun,*
- *priest,*
- *you'd go join a convent or monastery”.*

And so the cosmic, world changing, 24/7 kingdom of God task was shrunk down to a few hundred people singing songs in a building for an hour and a half every Sunday.

This kind of thinking was pervasive throughout the church until 1500's. Then there began to develop a movement of people who began saying radical, subversive, new - actually quite old- things about Jesus, and what it means to live as God's people.

They called themselves **REFORMERS (pics)**.

Their goal was to *reform* the church from the inside out. And one of the things they did was to take to task this sacred/secular way of thinking

They pointed to verses like this one in I Peter,

***<sup>9</sup>But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.***  
*I Peter 2: 9 NIV*

Keep in mind, this is the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. There already were priests - guys in black robes who worked for the church. They acted as a kind of bridge, between God and common, everyday people dispensing life and blessing.

Reformers said: *"No, no, no. Peter is saying we are ALL priests!!"*

- Are you a farmer? Well you're also a priest.
- Are you a lawyer? you are also a priest.
- Are you a student in college? you're also a priest.

You're dispensing life and blessing to people **THROUGH WHAT YOU DO!!**

The reformers began to chip away at this disastrous secular/sacred divided ideology to get God's people back to the original God's saturated, full-in, you can't swim to the bottom kind of life that Jesus wants for all of us.

Yet many Christians still remain in this divided world. And there spiritual life is related only to those things that are connected with church:

There only truly being "spiritual" when they are:

- Singing a Worship songs
- Taking notes on the sermon
- Volunteering in the children's wing
- Helping out with some service project in the community.

But when they go to work, or out eat, or take in a movie with friends. . . they are just like everyone else.

Which means, all too often, they end up:

- shopping, spending and consuming like everyone else
- overworking and get burning out like everyone else
- running their business by chasing only the bottom line just like everyone else.

This is true of a lot of good people- really good people - who love Jesus deeply.

- We see this in people who want to make a ton of money so they can give it to Kingdom endeavors: sponsoring water projects in Africa, rescuing sex workers. And this is great. I say, "Go for it!!"
- But it also matters what you **actually do for a living!!** Is it good, redemptive, does it bring healing and help people/world to flourish?
- Because, from the standpoint of Jesus Kingdom, it doesn't matter if you make a million dollars and give most of it away, if what you make is:
  - cheap or
  - ugly or
  - dehumanizing,
  - or harmful to the earth and people on it.

**What I'm saying is that: What you do FOR work matters just as much as (if not more than) the money you make FROM your work.**

This brings us back to this concept of vocation and calling.

The human **vocation** is to join God in the extraordinary work of creation and redemption. And we do that through our work. Every human on planet has the same vocation.

But, as we said, we humans are incredibly unique and beautifully diverse.

So our **calling** has to do with who we uniquely and distinctively are and how that aligns with the human vocation.

**Q:** Well, how does one come to understand God has CALLED me to do in this world? Best place to start, and what I tell my students at Judson, is by asking good questions?

Five Questions to Ask to Help Discover Ones Calling:

1. **What do you love? :**
  - a. What are you passionate about?
  - b. What makes you angry? What keeps you up at night?
  - c. Another way to ask: What would you do if you didn't need the money? Sit by the pool☺. No you wouldn't. You be bored out of your mind.
2. **What are you good at? (and bad at?):**
  - a. What do people around you say, *"Wow, you're good. Should do that more often."*
  - b. Try different things, experiment.
3. **What does the World Need?:**
  - a. When you look around at your city, your nation, your generation – the world at large – what is it missing? What does it need more of?
  - b. When you look at the world and you think *"Somebody needs to do something about that?"*
4. **Does it make the world a more Garden like place?**
  - a. Does it make the world more beautiful? Does it contribute to people flourishing? Is it good for the earth? Does it bring joy to your city, nation, world?
  - b. Most importantly, is it something that God smiles on? After a hard day's labor, can you hear God whisper in your ear. . . well done?
  - c. There is some work that **cannot** be a calling from God:
    - i. Running a club that sexualizes/objectifies women.
    - ii. Manipulating home buyers into loans they can't afford.
    - iii. Siphoning the natural resources of the developing world so the 1% can live a little be more comfortable.
    - iv. Personally, I don't think you be a sniper or drone operator.
      1. Don't see how that reconcile that with Jesus command to love your enemies.

- v. But regardless whether you agree, there is work that brings healing and hope and beauty to the world. . .while other kinds of work bring violence and ugliness and poverty and chaos to it.
- vi. And so the only way that something be a calling from God is if it harmonizes with character of Jesus and his vision of the Kingdom.
- vii. So what about your work/job/career? Does it help humanity? Will it make the world a better place? A more garden like place?

#### 5. What doors are opening in your life?

- a. You're not alone in this. Not as a follower of Jesus.
- b. We are God's partners and so he's involved in our story to the degree we open up our lives to his leadership.
- c. So what's in front of you? What's happening? What not happening?
- d. Where is God leading? hat has He spread out in front of you?

#### Conclusion:

- Here's what All this means. Regardless of whether you are a:
  - Construction worker
  - Or a plumber
  - Or a teacher
  - Or a denial hygienist,
  - You are not a Christian construction worker, Christian teacher, whatever.
- You're a Christian – a follower of Jesus, the ONE true King of the World – **and** you're a denial hygienist or barista or **FILL IN THE BLANK.**
- So do your work – whatever it is – AS A FOLLOWER of Jesus. Because there are no compartments. The way of Jesus should permeate and influence every facet of your life.
- So what does that look like for you this week? Well maybe that means:
  - You leverage your small business to reflect the justice and mercy of the world's true KING and His KINGDOM.
    - Means you hire people who would have a hard time getting work other places because their past.
    - Or you give away some of your profits to a low income school in your area.
    - And you make sure that your product is sustainable for the environment and builds up local economy.
  - Or maybe it just means you show up at your job everyday as an accountant or a receptionist and you do your job really, really well. . .and the world is a better, more orderly, more garden like place after you leave than when you got there.
    - Because each day you show up, you reflect the image of the God reveled in Jesus – God of grace, mercy, forgiveness, compassion, unconditional love.
    - A God who cares deeply for this physical world and whose mission is to rescue and restore it. . .with Jesus resurrection as proof.

- And as you do, your boss, your coworkers, your contractors, your clients will all get a glimpse of what this Kingdom think is all about, and will want to join in.
- My hope and prayer this morning is that most of you are starting to realize that what you do for a living is a calling and that it matters more that you know. Even if it has **absolutely nothing to do with traditional church activities**, it still has weight, has impact, makes a difference.
- Because we live in a world with no compartments. For those who are spiritual – who seek to allow the Spirit to guide and influence all we do- the line between heaven and earth is thin at best. . .the sacred is never far away from anything do.
- My prayer is that whatever your calling, that it would be infused with Jesus' Kingdom vision, with the goal of raising up whether you are to make it a more garden like place. . . as you join him in the work of creation and restoration.

ILL: Christianity Today "The Art of Restoration" Detroit.