

Session #10 – *Two Kingdoms, Part 2*

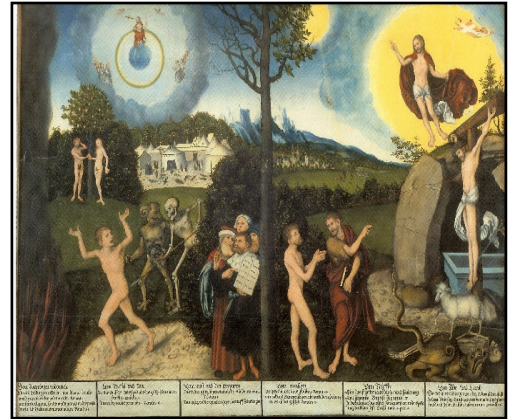
Read: Chapter 6 second half, pp. 169-180

Introduction

What is the proper relationship between a Christian and the culture they inhabit? Can we inhabit the culture and still be honoring and obedient to a holy God? How concerned should we be with being culturally relevant? Lutheran teaching brings a unique and extremely helpful viewpoint to these difficult questions in the doctrine of the two kingdoms.

Opening Prayer – Collect 410 (LSB 313)

O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey Your commandments and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Law and Gospel*,
Herzogliches Museum, Gotha, Germany.

Opening Hymn – LSB 657: A Mighty Fortress is Our God

Scripture – Luke 20:21-25

²¹ So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. ²² Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" ²³ But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, ²⁴ "Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." ²⁵ He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

The Spirituality of the Cross Study Guide

Pastor Rob Morris, Christ the King Lutheran Church, Summer 2023

Quotes and Questions from Veith:

“The first use of the moral law is to restrain evil, and this applies specifically to the evils of society. When rulers (or political systems or cultures) violate God’s moral law – when they are corrupt, oppressive, or overtly evil – they are in rebellion against God’s will and are acting outside of their vocations. When they violate God’s law, they are to be called to account. Citizenship itself is a vocation, and Christian citizens are right to criticize evil wherever they see it – including in their leaders – and to work for social, political, and cultural righteousness in the public square.” (p. 170)

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- Lutheranism has often been accused to contributing to, if not flat out causing, the Nazi movement in WWII-era Germany. How does this reflect a misunderstanding of Lutheran theology?

“Trying to “impose” one’s religious beliefs on others would indeed be a violation of the Gospel. The Church, Luther insisted, may not use coercive power... Christians, he said, should suffer for their faith, following the cross of Christ rather than defend their faith through violence...

“The secular ruler, on the other hand, does employ power, the office of 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. They should protect the church, which will not protect itself.” (p. 174-175)

- What are the dangers of mingling the two kingdoms? What happens if the church wields the sword? What happens if the state wields the Word?

“The kingdoms can also be confused when earthly authorities presume to grant spiritual benefits. Projects that claim to solve all human problems, reform human nature, and eliminate the effects of sin – all through human ideologies and social engineering – may seem well-intentioned, but they are nearly always dangerous. It is a great irony of history that when human beings devise utopian schemes to set up heaven on earth, they come closer to setting up a hell.” (p. 175-176)

“ [Quoting Luther’s *Freedom of the Christian*:] ‘A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.’” (p. 178)

- Explain this paradox.
- How does it transform our “lordship” when we remember we are also “servants”?
- How does it transform our “servanthood” when we remember we are also “lords”?
- What are some practical areas of Christian and Church life where this distinction should be evident?

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Connections with Small Catechism:

Reflect on the relationship between the **Table of Duties** and each of the following: **the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer.**

Conclusion

Like justification, the means of grace, and vocation, this doctrine of the two kingdoms is incredibly freeing to the Christian. It rescues us from trying to earn salvation, while empowering and equipping us to serve humanity selflessly. In other words, we stop sacrificing to please God. Instead, accepting Christ's sacrifice for us, we now sacrifice to serve others. Because this is a doctrine that brings freedom, it is under constant attack from the devil, the world, and our sinful nature. This is why it is so reassuring to know that "The Kingdom's ours forever."

Closing Prayer