

Session #8: – Vocation, Part 2

Read: Chapter 5, pp. 139-157
(note: this is the second half of the chapter)

Introduction

The concept of vocation reshapes our perspective on what would otherwise be considered daily, “unspiritual” life. Throughout history, many have divided the secular from the sacred, the holy from the mundane. In vocation, God merges them. However, no area of such blessing can be free from Satan’s attack, and thus vocation can be an area of great trial as well.

Opening Prayer – Collect 194 (LSB 311)

Heavenly Father, grant Your mercy and grace to Your people in their many and various callings. Give them patience, and strengthen them in their Christian vocation of witness to the world and of service to their neighbor in Christ’s name; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

Opening Hymn – LSB 857: Lord, Help Us Walk Your Servant Way



The Garden of Eden
Lucas Cranach the Elder, 1530
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden

Scripture -

Colossians 3:18-24

⁸ Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. ¹⁹ Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. ²⁰ Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. ²¹ Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. ²² Slaves, obey in everything those who are your

earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Quotes and Questions from Veith:

“...a vocation is not something we choose for ourselves. Rather, it is given by God, who ‘calls’ us to a particular work or relationship or set of neighbors. God gives each individual unique talents, skills, and inclinations. He also puts each individual in a unique set of external circumstances, which are understood as having been providentially arranged by God. Since vocation is not self-chosen, it can be known also through the actions of others. Getting offered a job, being elected to an office, and finding someone who wants to marry you – all in the ordinary ways - are all ways of finding vocation...” (139)

/In an earlier edition Veith adds: “Essentially, your vocation is to be found in the place you occupy in the present.” (2nd edition, 103)

- Given how much time is spent in America analyzing personality types and job aptitudes, how does the doctrine of *vocation* shape those pursuits?
- In what ways does this doctrine challenge you? In what ways does it comfort you?

“[What of vocations like soldier, judge, or executioner?] Luther concludes that being a soldier is, in fact, a way of serving and loving one’s neighbors. In their personal relationships as Christians, soldiers are to forgive their own enemies, but in protecting their country, their vocation allows them to fight and even kill on the battlefield. Being a soldier is, in fact, a ‘blessed order,’ a ministry of love.” (142)

“Similarly, I would argue that since a father’s vocation includes protecting his family, he may use force to do so. But a doctor’s vocation is to heal, not kill (ruling out euthanasia). A mother’s vocation is to nurture her children (ruling out abortion).” (143)

- Discuss how the concept of *vocation* reshapes these ethical questions.

“A corollary to the notion that each vocation has its divinely-appointed sphere is that problems will arise when people try to act outside of their vocations. Again, consider the spectacle of me trying to repair electrical appliances. When we work outside of our vocations – that is, without regard to our God-given abilities, inclinations, and offices in life – we usually fail miserably or, more seriously, violate the moral law. It is possible – and common – to pursue occupations for which we have no aptitude. That may signify a lack of vocation.” (144)

- In what ways does this teaching challenge you? In what ways does it comfort you?

“[On the pastoral vocation] Pastors are not ever to use force, to coerce or manipulate anyone into belief; they must trust the power of the Word. They are to preach the Word without compromise, even when it condemns the policies and power systems of the world, but they are never to become merely political, which would trespass upon the vocation of earthly rulers. The pastor’s vocation is to call sinners into a kingdom that does not pass away.” (147)

“Often or occasionally, vocation turns into a burden, a cross to bear. The theology of the cross applies in particular to vocation...”

The Spirituality of the Cross Study Guide

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

“Since God is at work in vocation, observes Wingren, the devil seeks to thwart vocation. One way is to turn it away from sacrificial service and love of neighbor to a ‘theology of glory’... Another ploy of the devil is to pry the person out of his or her calling... Bearing the cross in vocation often involves the sense that one’s vocation is worthless or futile.” (149-150)

- Reflect a little bit on the correlation between the theology of the cross and the doctrine of vocation. How does one support or influence the other?

“Trials in vocation drive us to prayer... And the most intense, passionate, seeking prayer comes when we are struggling... (151)

“Prayer, from our perspective, brings God into our vocation. We commit what we do to God, surrendering to His will and trusting in His providence.” (152)

- Reflect a little bit on the correlation between vocation and prayer.

Connections with Small Catechism:

The Lord’s Prayer:

The Third Petition Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

What does this mean? The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is God’s will done? God’s will is done when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God’s name or let His kingdom come; and when He strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die. This is his good and gracious will.

- How does much of Christianity view the concept of God’s will and how is the Lutheran view different?
- How does viewing God’s will in this way free us in terms of our *vocation*?

Confession:

What sins should we confess? Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord’s Prayer; but before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

Which are these? Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments: Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, or worker? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you been hot-tempered rude, or quarrelsome? Have you hurt someone by your words or deeds? Have you stolen, been negligent, wasted anything, or done any harm?

- If the Ten Commandments are not to be considered a way to earn God’s favor, what healthy role can they play in the life of the believer?

Conclusion

Vocation, because it is such an area of blessing, both to the Christian and through the Christian to all the world, is also an area of much trial and attack. This is a sobering thought. However, given what we've already learned of the theology of the cross, we find that vocation can be a wonderful tool that God can use to grow our own faith as well. Thus, through the faithful service that God enables, we serve others in their physical needs, and God serves us in our spiritual needs. This is God's economy, where all that was once considered loss is now immeasurable gain because of His great faithfulness.

Closing Prayer