

WELCOME 13th November 2022 – 23rd Sunday after Pentecost '22 C

Mark 12:28-34, Col 2:23-24 & 2 Thess 1:11-12

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! **Bible Study Qs** are there to equip you so God can lead you deeper into His word/work in your life, & so you can share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups** on Friday @ 1p.m.

As we move into this week... **Aaand** what do you do?

More than politeness or a quick fill to a quiet spot in a conversation, discovering how someone works for their daily bread is how we locate one another on our great social kaleidoscope...that shifting pattern of relationships/connections that in some eras became a measure of worth or value; a scale of honour or dignity. We viewed teachers/tradies, law enforcement/clergy, & medical workers/labourers differently.

One of the triumphs of the Reformation was the reclaiming **of** VOCATION...the calling **ALL THE BAPTIZED** share to **Work** willingly at **whatever you do**, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people... Scripture reminds us that God's love for us rebounds & multiplies in love for him through the loving service we render to our neighbour in the name of Jesus.

So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call. May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do.

More than simply evangelizing our workplace or neighbourhood, you live your call your vocation when Christ calls the shots from the centre of all you are & his grace flows through you in all you do. To live your vocation is to allow the love of God to fill you so the grace of God flows through you in every aspect of your life...whatever you do...wherever you are in that great social kaleidoscope.

Today...We'll talk...For followers of Jesus, vocation is not just how we fill our days & our bank account until...It's where the love of God for us reaches someone else through us in the ordinary daily work & walk of our lives & we experience the power of the Cross & the life of Christ in all we do...Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord, you call us by name & gift us uniquely & powerfully for the good you intend our hands to accomplish. By your Spirit grant confidence & boldness in our identity gifts & passions. Help us to hear & obey the call of Jesus in our lives, & to find faithful life-giving ways to return love for you through the lives of those around us. Let it be in us according to your word...Jesus in your Name... Amen.

Let's hear God's word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. Complete the sentence:
"I've always wondered what it was like to be a _____"
2. How does/did your relationship with Christ effect your working life or your retired life?

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I compared her to a dinosaur... & not only did she NOT hit me she agreed. I went to her office to address some insurance & financial questions & was told she'd worked in this office for this company for 48 years. Now I know if you who've lived & worked on 3-4-5 generation family property, 48 years is a drop in the bucket, but in the business world... 1 person - 1 office for that long is just not reality any longer. I told her my dad had worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad for 42 yrs & when he walked out the door no one w/in cooee had been there near as long... he was a dinosaur... the last of an extinct breed. She agreed. She'd retired a few times but kept coming back "casually" (at her discretion) because they couldn't find anyone to stay in her position longer than 12 months. We had no good explanation for that...

One of the things I think happens... & it was a pastoral leadership lesson they taught in Seminary... I've seen it in business journals from long ago & it's awful... They told us to draw our week's schedule like this... Divide the week into 28 hourly segments. At least 7 of those you'll be sleeping & 8 should be *YOUR* time out of the office away from work. Can you see the problem? Not that pastors don't deserve more than 1 day off... not that ministry is unpredictable & won't fit into boxes... every vocation has uncertainties & overtime seasons... They told me there was time in the week that was "mine." And that's wrong. The suggestion that there is a "mine" & a "God's" part of the calendar separate from one another is simply wrong.

The earth is the Lord's, & everything in it. The world & all its people belong to him. – Ps 24:1
There is no "mine." CS Lewis said, There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch is claimed by God & counterclaimed by Satan." Of the ≈ 32 million seconds in a year... not 1 of them is mine. Not 1 of them is yours. Life itself is not little-boxable segments some is mine some is family some is kids some is hobbies & some is God's. In fact God APPOINTED times of "rest" (rest too is his) & the Biblical "day" begins @ sunset to demonstrate that the universe operates fully w/o our intervention. The universe does not need me to keep it spinning. God is sovereign over all things including the ticks of the clock we kid ourselves into believing we can control or that we believe are our own to do w/ as we please. God is sovereign... 2nd...

I mentioned the Reformation earlier... In Luther's day those who pursued a fulltime life & call in ministry... in any of the varieties of service in the church were considered to have followed a "higher" calling. It was more "holy" to be a nun than a housewife or milkmaid or seamstress or carpenter or farmer... but Luther & then the others were captured by the power of Gal 3:26-27 - *For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ, like putting on new clothes.* Through baptism & faith we are fully joined to Jesus &

therefore all that we do from that perspective becomes holy. When Christ calls the shots from the centre of all you are & his grace flows through you in all you do at that moment you live out your call/vocation... whatever that is. When all of you is **directed by & in harmony with** all of him... **that** is your call. Frederick Buechner says The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness & the world's deep hunger meet. Social influencer misses #2, but being a Dr in a leper colony & hating every minute misses #1.

God extends his call/vocation to every heart, & blesses/honours the offerings of all kinds of occupations & activities that are the lived response to his love for you in Jesus Christ... **NB** - Eph 2:10 - *For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.* No one is going to walk the steps you walk tomorrow. No one is going to meet the people you meet... have the opportunities you have. Working, retired, or really-tired. Only you have those opportunities... *planned for you long ago.*

I just finished re-reading the book of Jeremiah. I'm always struck by his call: Jer 1:4ff - *The Lord gave me this message: "Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you. Before you were born I set you apart & appointed you as my prophet to the nations."* Immediately Jeremiah pushes back "O Sovereign Lord... I can't speak for you! I'm too young!" "Don't say, 'I'm too young,' for you must go wherever I send you & say whatever I tell you. And don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you & will protect you. I, the Lord, have spoken!" Then the Lord reached out & touched my mouth... When all of you is **directed by & in harmony with** all of him... **that** is your call & at no point will God ask of you anything beyond what God has equipped you to do/say.

Just like we said 2 weeks ago... Our lives are intended to become the lived result of the crucified risen Jesus taking hold of us in eternal love: Christ's love compels us. *Since we believe Christ died for all, we also believe we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died & was raised for them.* – 2 Cor 5:14-15 In Christ our call at every place & stage of life is to love God by loving the people God puts in our path & serving them in love to our highest capacity. To see them through the resurrected eyes of Jesus & care for them from the Father's heart that sent his Son for them.

In his 1972 book, Working, author Studs Turkel describes how people search for a level of meaning & significance in their employment that goes beyond the actual financial rewards they receive. Everybody who has ever held any sort of job wants it to matter somehow... \$\$\$ is usually not enough. *Hope you hit a gusher!* It is a search, he writes, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than boredom; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying." If only more people new the joy of 2 Cor 5:15.

I believe far too many Christians live as if there's a huge gap b/t their faith & the 40-or-so-hour work week or the life they have beyond daily devotions & weekend worship. It should be...God's call to all Christians is to work for the health of their families, communities, & world through their daily labor...whatever that is. Through our prayers, gifts, words & deeds of kindness & encouraging graciousness, our struggles to be faithful in difficult circumstances & our repeated repentance for the brokenness that simply refuses to be healed....to make the life **OF** Jesus & the way of life IN Jesus visible & attractive in even the most ordinary of tasks.

So we keep on praying for you, asking our God to enable you to live a life worthy of his call.
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Remember... Vocation is the calling *ALL THE BAPTIZED* share to *Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.*

TAKE IT HOME -

What's one thing you can do each day
to remind yourself that you have a calling from God?
What will you do to actually live it?

Let's pray... Lord Jesus, you knew what it was to work. You called Paul to serve you while he still made tents. By your Spirit in us, use the gifts we have, the skills we've learned & the hours in the day you provide to love you in the love we show to someone we encounter this week. You died & rose & sent your Spirit to live in us so the power of your resurrected life would be seen through us daily. Use all that we are so those around us see all that you are...Let it be in us according to your word...Jesus in your Name... Amen.