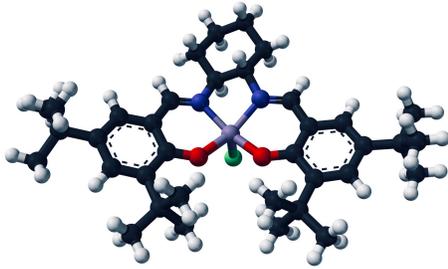


Catalyst Sermon Series 2019



Catalyst is a plan designed to spark conversations, prayer, and build community around the Vision and Mission of Christ Covenant Church for a the re-planting of a church around a movement of the gospel at 3100 Covenant Road in 2019.

You can listen to the Catalyst Sermon Series, *Gospel Centrality* from Galatians 2:11-21, *Stewarding a Gospel Movement* from 1 Peter 2:4-12, *God Seeks Worshipers from John 4*, *God Builds Community from Acts 2:37-48*, *Generous Lives Luke 10:25-37*, and *Humble Cultural Engagement John 5:1-17* at www.ccotc.org/sermons. This is the final article in this series. It will give you a summary of what was covered in the final portion of our Vision,

humble cultural engagement.

Humble Cultural Engagement by Our Work

At Christ Covenant Church we long to see a movement of the gospel that will bring about *generous lives in words and deeds through a humble cultural engagement*. We are saying that we believe a gospel shaped heart will create humble Christians who engage the world in their work. God has served his church so that his service continues through her in a public cultivation of culture. He does this through our work, our callings, our places of service in the culture we live serving our neighbors. A movement of the gospel expresses itself in our public faith in this world. In John 5:1-17 we see Jesus is the ultimate example of humble cultural engagement. He is the second Adam come into the world to accomplish salvation and cultivation for a new creation. He's the culture maker. He says, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." (Jn.5:17). Here we see what work is, what's wrong with work, and how our humble engagement in culture through our work is restored.

Work Dignified

Jesus dignifies work. In pagan cultures work is an evil that the gods leave to the creature. Marduk says in the Mesopotamian creation myth, "I will bring into being lowly primitive creature man. That will be his name. To him will be charged all the labor, so that the gods may have their ease." But the Scripture says, *my Father is working until now, and I am working*. Jesus who is God, and one with God the Father, is saying that work is good.

When God created the heavens and the earth he created all things good. And when he created man and woman as his image bearers to cultivate culture he expressed this as very good. The Triune God created a paradise for his creatures to live and in that paradise he created work. When God who has been working from the beginning created his paradise, he created it with work. You can't have bliss or paradise or a utopia without work. That's a high view of work. But the first Adam failed to retain the image of God as a worker.

Therefore, Jesus Christ came as the second Adam to restore the image of God and renew his creation. And he came working. He worked as a carpenter for most of his young adult life, and then began a ministry of word and deed until his death on the cross. In John 5 he is working to bring joy into the feast in Jerusalem by seeking and saving the lost, showing compassion and restoring wholeness to the lame, teaching the Jews how to rightly understand their days and their God, and leading them to faith in him who works for them. God the Father is using the work of God the Son to love those in the world through work. We can all participate in humble cultural engagement by recognizing that all our work is dignified by the Lord Jesus Christ coming into the world as a worker, a culture maker, a cultivator of the world.

Therefore all work is good. We don't have to spend our days trying to get out of work. We can participate in all kinds of work seeing it as the way God is loving our neighbors through us. We can understand that all kinds of work is valuable. There is not one kind of work that should be valued over another. Christians should put away

their snobbery in regard to work. We tend to value “white collar” work over “blue collar” work. We value “professionals” over “working class”. God uses all kinds of work to love his creatures in his creation, and our humble cultural engagement embraces this truth whether we’re laying brick or doing heart surgery, changing a diaper or preparing law briefs, teaching children or managing financial portfolios. And because God dignifies work we should do our work well. The best way to honor God in our work is by doing the best we can in whatever he gives our hearts and hands to do. But just as we see God dignifying work in Jesus’ work in our text, we also can see what’s wrong with work in our text.

Work Corrupted by Sin

Why do we find work frustrating? Why do we find work difficult? Why do we want to get away from our work? It’s here in our text. Here’s a festival. A celebration of God’s salvation among his people. There should be celebration, rejoicing, people loving and serving one another. But instead man is looking out for himself. Here’s a place where the lame, blind, deaf, and suffering come, but no one’s helping the invalid. The Jewish religious leaders are contentious, angry, and uncaring toward the helpless poor. Israel was meant to be a blessing to all the nations. They were a people through whom peace, shalom, would come to all kinds of people, their own and outsiders through their culture making, their cultural engagement as the image bearers, the redeemed people of God. But they’re not. They don’t want to help their neighbor in need and they want to destroy the life of Jesus. What has happened to work?

Work is corrupted by man’s image breaking and it’s results, self seeking. When man turns his work into a substitute for God he works for himself. Man works to ‘change the world’ because he needs to get salvation from his work. A person needs meaning, significance, importance, and justification from his work when he does not trust God’s work for him or her in Jesus Christ. The image of God in man was defaced when sin entered the world. He no longer saw the created things as gifts from God to be used in cultivation of culture for the glory of God by a dependent trust in God. They became things he would use for self salvation. So he would use them to make a name for himself. This idolatry lead to the destruction of culture as it rejected the knowledge of God and his righteousness through a dependence on his work and to be his workmanship for the love of others. Andy Crouch says, “Instead of relational and cultural diversity, human beings now seek domination and uniformity. Instead of using our reason to celebrate and care for God’s world, we use it to exploit the world. And instead of caring for one another in our vulnerability, we take advantage of one another’s vulnerability.” This is image breaking to make a name for self rather than the glory of God and the good of our neighbors in our work. But God.

Work Restored

In John 5 Jesus is revealed as the one working to restore work in the hearts of his restored image bearers. Work is only restored to the proper place of being for the glory of God and the good of our neighbors when Jesus is working for us. Humble cultural engagement requires faith in Jesus Christ. It requires salvation in Jesus Christ and renewal in that salvation day after day. Jesus came working to restore his creatures and his creation by working to accomplish salvation through a perfect righteous life. His worked by the sweat of the brow as he kept the law of God perfectly in all his work in our place. He took on the thorns as he wore them in the form of a crown upon his head suffering the wrath of God in the place of sinners. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven to defeat the work of sin and death, and to work on behalf of his own forevermore, even preparing a place in his for us in his presence. It is faith in Jesus Christ, a dependent trust in his work, that restores our work. It is being filled with all the fullness of God with a knowledge of his loving work on our behalf that makes us his workmanship prepared to walk in his works in the earth for his glory, not self glory, and for the good of our neighbors in love. This is image restoring by grace. We work in gratitude by faith loving in every area of the work he’s prepared for us to walk in. It does not have to be ‘world changing’ work. It’s ordinary but restored, and it’s how he restores all things to himself. He restores image bearers for humble cultural engagement.

Catalyst Conversations...Sign Up for One in the Narthex at Barnwell St.

Please take the opportunity to participate in a Catalyst Conversation by signing up after Worship or Life Groups. Catalyst Conversations are an opportunity for you to participate with other church members, regular attenders, and guests in a discussion around CCC’s Vision and Mission. We desire that you have an opportunity to engage yourselves and affirm together what we believe is God’s biblical vision for his church. The Catalyst Conversation is a small group gathering of 8-10 people facilitated by a couple (husband & wife) who will be prepared to lead the discussion. We desire that the Catalyst Sermon Series and the Catalyst Conversations will lead us as a church toward a planning process for the re-planting of Christ Covenant Church at 3100 Covenant Road. Therefore, your participation in these conversations is vital to a movement of the gospel at Christ Covenant Church.