

April 8, 2018
 —THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING—
 OUR VOCATION IN CREATION

Genesis 1; 1 Cor. 7:17; Matthew 5:16

In October of 2016, we did a four week preaching series called *The Gospel Changes Everything*. You can find that on our website if you would like to listen to it. For myself, that series was nothing short of revolutionary—massive worldview categories shifted. This morning, we are going to begin our second part of that series, looking at vocation. Vocation comes from a Latin word¹ meaning “to call” (1 Cor. 7:17). Today most people see *vocation* as their work, as their job. I’m going to be using that word “work” throughout this message, *often* as a synonym for vocation. But strictly speaking they are not synonyms. Hopefully that will be clear at the end. Like that original series we will be looking at vocation through the categories of creation, fall, redemption, and glory. The reason why these categories are so helpful is because everybody on planet earth has to answer these questions.

Creation: How did this universe begin? What is its purpose?

Fall: What has gone wrong? Why is there evil and suffering?

Redemption: Is there an answer for this evil and suffering? How can individuals and the world be set right again?

Glory: Where is all of this going? How does this story finally end?

And those four categories shape our vocation.

Creation: Why is work a blessing? Why is work *necessary* for a fulfilled life?

Fall: Why is work so *hard*? Why is work *often* such a source of frustration?

Redemption: How will you overcome the frustration of work and find joy in it through the gospel? How does Jesus redeem your work?

Glory: What will work in Heaven look like? What is God calling us to for all eternity?

¹ *vocare*

Cultural anorexia vs. cultural gluttony

The difficulty with speaking about vocation is that we as Christians are always fighting against two extremes that hinder our ability to think about the City of God and the City of man rightly. The two extremes, as Art Azurdia recently pointed out, are cultural anorexia and cultural gluttony.

Cultural anorexia

Cultural anorexia is when you desire nothing to do with the world. Your heart is elsewhere. You are heavenly minded *but* you are no earthly good. You are working for the weekend. You are just punching your time card, crossing off the days until Christ returns, enduring the secular stuff in-between the spiritual stuff. You are not seeking the welfare of the city, because you think, why polish the brass on a sinking ship? And perhaps you find justification for this view, because you hear Paul say in **Philippians 1:23** “My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better” But you forget the verse that precedes it “If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me”

Cultural gluttony

The other extreme is cultural gluttony, which is when you feel very much at home with the world. You have become seduced by the world, it's impulses are your impulses. You have become so earthly minded that you are of no heavenly good. Stephen J. Nichols says of this type “To them, this world eclipses the next...they are consumed by this world's agenda and are driven by its passions. They may very well use Christian lingo to baptize their pursuits, but their hearts are not directed toward their home.”² For this type, Paul's claim “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (**Phil. 1:21**) is simply unintelligible to them.

² Stephen J. Nichols, *Heaven on Earth: Capturing Jonathan Edwards's Vision of Living In Between*, (Wheaton, IL.; Crossway, 2006), pg. 19

The *isms* that fuel these extremes

Hidden underneath these two extremes are unbiblical philosophical commitments. Underneath cultural anorexia is the age old heresy of gnosticism. Among other things, gnosticism teaches that “the spirit realm is good and the material world is bad.”³ This is appealing to many Christians because it *seems* to take the spiritual high road.⁴ And what this does is that it divorces the secular from the sacred. And this is devastating to vocation. This divides all work into two categories. “Sacred work was work done by members of the religious profession. All other work bore the stigma of being secular.”⁵ And this view has been around for centuries—since the beginning of the church. Here’s a prayer traced all the way back to the Jewish Talmud, written by one of the scribes:

“I thank thee, O Lord, my God, that thou has given me my lot with those who sit in the house of learning, and not with those who sit at the street corners; for I am early to work and they are early to work; I am early to work on the words of the Torah, and they are early to work on things of no moment. I weary myself, and they weary themselves; I weary myself and profit thereby, and they weary themselves to no profit.”⁶

Cultural anorexia is fueled by the wrong divorce between the sacred and the secular. And it strips all so called “secular work” of it’s God-given dignity.

On the other hand, underneath cultural gluttony, is the very Americanized heresy of radical individualism and radical pragmatism. Regarding

³ Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, (Carol Stream, IL.,: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004), pg. 52

⁴ Randy Alcorn coined the phrase “Christoplatonism.” Many of Plato’s thoughts are gifts of common grace to all humanity, yet since he wasn’t grounded in Scripture, his views led to a dualism between the material and spiritual. He had a saying “Soma sema” which means “a body, a tomb” and this asserted that humanity’s highest destiny was to be forever set free from the body. The Apostle Paul combatted these philosophical assumptions in his letters to the Corinthians, and the Apostle John combatted this philosophy in 1 John. And we still fight this influence today. Christoplatonism is the “...unbiblical belief (smuggled into Christian thought) that the spirit realm is good and the material world is bad.” *ibid*, pg. 475, 52

⁵ Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Zondervan, 1990), pg. 24

⁶ *ibid*

individualism, author Robert Bellah points out “we are moving to an even greater validation of the sacredness of the individual person, [but] our capacity to imagine a social fabric that would hold individuals together is vanishing...the sacredness of the individual is not balanced by any sense of the whole or concern for the common good.”⁷ The fact that vocation was designed by God for us to love of neighbor is not even on the radar. And so cultural gluttony is born. We live in the age of astonishing inter-connectedness and yet we often obsessed with our screens more than our neighbor.

But cultural glutton is also fueled by pragmatism. Pragmatism doesn’t ask the question, is *it* true? But does *it* work? Of course that question is being asked through a man-centered lens? Does it work for *what*? Since the cultural glutton is already radically individualized, he asks the question “does it work *for* a bigger paycheck, for more self-fulfillment, for a greater reputation.” He’s not asking the question “Does this work for God’s glory and the love of my neighbor.”

The Gospel Changes Vocation

We need a new perspective on vocation. Actually the truth is, we need a very old perspective on vocation—one that goes all the way back to Genesis one. God wants to correct both of these wrong views. He doesn’t want us to suffer from cultural anorexia or cultural gluttony. He wants us to see our vocation as culturally affirming for the glory of God and the love of our neighbor. So the questions we are seeking to address today are these: Why is work a blessing? Why is work *necessary* for a fulfilled life?

☆The Glory of God’s Good Work

☆The Glory of Our Good Work

⁷ From his book *Habits of the Heart*, quoted in Tim Keller’s *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work*, (New York, NY.: Penguin Group, 2012), pg. 19

The Big Idea...

Your everyday calling is to do good for others to God's glory

I. The Glory of God's Good Work

'In the beginning God worked...'

Let's turn back to Genesis 1. What do we find here? In the beginning, God worked! How does God introduce Himself to the world? As a worker.⁸ The chief thing on display in the first part of Genesis 1 is God's working—six glorious days of work. And we see six glorious works that God is doing before man even comes on the scene. And these six glorious works show God's infinite generosity and kindness towards humanity.

Work #1: God creates

Look at v.1 "In the beginning, God *created* the heavens and the earth." Tim Keller points out here:

"The creation narrative in the book of Genesis is unique among ancient accounts of origins. Many cultures had stories that depicted the beginning of the world and human history as the result of a struggle between warring cosmic forces. In the Babylonian creation story...the god Marduk overcomes the goddess Tiamat and forges the world out of her remains...In the Bible, however, creation is not the result of a conflict, for God has no rivals...Creation...is not the aftermath of a battle but the plan of a craftsman. God made the world not as a warrior digs a trench but as an artist makes a masterpiece."⁹

⁸ "The Bible's story of the world opens with God doing work, six days of it." James M. Hamilton Jr., *Work And Our Labor In The Lord*, (Wheaton, IL.,: Crossway, 2017), pg. 18

⁹ Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*, (New York, NY.,: Penguin Group, 2012), pg. 34

What do we learn about God in the first verse of the Bible? He is infinitely creative. God is composing the first stanzas of the universe in Genesis 1:1. God is a shaper, a fashioner, and former—He is the Chief Artisan. Why do artists paint? Why do musicians compose? Because they love beauty. That’s God’s first work: He creates.

Work #2: God cherishes

Look at v.2 “The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was *hovering* over the face of the waters.” *Hovering*. This is the poetry of affection. Only three times this Hebrew word is used. The clearest picture of this word from **Deuteronomy 32:9-11** “But the Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that *flutters* over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions,” This hovering of Genesis 1:2 is everything the Lord is doing in Deuteronomy 32:11. The Spirit of God encircles creation like a momma eagle encircles her young, He cares for it, keeps it as the apple of His eye, bears it up, keeps it from falling, protects it. In short, the Spirit of God is cherishing creation. All of it. That’s God’s second work: He cherishes.

Work #3: God communicates

Look at v.3 “And God *said*, “Let there be light,” and there was light.” Genesis 1 records the words “God said” ten times. Our God is a speaking God. And God’s speech is authoritative. His work of speech forms and fills the heavens and the earth. But His work of speech also reveals His generous heart.

What is speech but the overflow of one’s heart? **Luke 6:45** says “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” So God’s speech here is authoritative—forming and filling the

universe; and His speech is generous—revealing a God who’s overflowing with kindness and hospitality. That’s God’s third work: He communicates.

Work #4: God celebrates

Look at v.4 “And God *saw* that the light was good.” Seven times we read in this chapter “And God *saw* that it was good.” This seeing *is* celebrating. God is admiring His work. He’s assigning value to it: “*It is good.*” Dear congregation, what is *good*? Moses, our author, is using “good” to describe what has been made. v.4—“*good* light”; v.10—“*good* land, *good* seas”; v.12—“*good* plants”; v.18—“*good* sun, *good* moon”; v.21—“*good* sea creatures, *good* birds”; v.25—“*good* land animals”; v.31—“everything He made was very *good*.” Why are these things *good*? Because they communicate happiness to the universe. That’s what it means to be good. It’s one of those words that we can use all the time without really thinking about it. Webster’s 1828 dictionary defines goodness as the ‘...advancing, abundant,...benevolent, affectionate, promotion of the happiness of others.’¹⁰ Goodness is intrinsically others centered. Think about all these things that God said were *good*. Is God in need this physical stuff? No. Solomon would later pray “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you;” (I Kings 8:27) God didn’t need Earth for a dwelling place. Nor was God fed by the food that He created. He says in Psalm 50:12 “If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine.” Dear congregation, God didn’t build earth for God. God built earth for man. And He specifically makes it good. Meaning, He didn’t make a vanilla earth. He made a universe full of mouth-watering tri-tip steak, breath-taking sunsets, music that moves the deepest part of your being; smells that make you think of other worlds, and nerve-endings that release endorphins that can make you feel like a soaring eagle. All this God prepared—before man

¹⁰ Webster’s 1828 Dictionary

good as an adjective (40 sub-definitions): extending, advancing, abundant, to be liberal, to be copious, to overflow,(conducive to happiness-#7), (kind, benevolent, affectionate-#20), (promotive of happiness, gratifying-#22), (merciful, gracious-#30), (cheerful-#32), (merry-#33);

good as a noun (7 sub-definitions): that which contributes to diminish or remove pain, or to increase happiness or prosperity; benefit; advantage, (the best fruits, richness, abundance-7)

ever came on the seen. Calvin says here “Thus man was rich before he was born”¹¹ That’s what God meant when He saw that it was good—“This will thrill my creation...This will show them how *good* I AM.” That’s God’s fourth work: He celebrates.

Work #5: God classifies

Look halfway through v.4 “And God *separated* the light from the darkness.” Seven times in Genesis 1, God accomplished the work of separating and gathering. God classified His creation. He distinguished one thing from another thing—this was God creating unique identities, and with that came an endless labyrinth of intellectual meaning. This *means* x, this *means* y. Einstein had the scientific mind that He had; Plato had the philosophical mind that He had; Paul had the theological mind that He had; because God classified different things, and distinguished different things to study. That’s God’ fifth work: He classifies.

Work #6: God calls

Look at v.5 “God *called* the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.” God is naming. He does so again and again. He names in v.5, v.8, v.10. What is the significance of naming things? Naming mines the meaning that God put in things, out of the hidden darkness and into the marvelous light. Naming causes things to be understood, known and remembered. Naming teaches and interprets and instructs. Naming frees, releases and secures. In short, naming is for the for the public good. Naming is God’s work causing intelligent beings to be able to communicate with each other. Names, words, propositions, are the

¹¹ “In the very order of the creation the paternal solicitude of God for man is conspicuous, because he furnished the world with all things needful, and even with an immense profusion of wealth, before he formed man. Thus man was rich before he was born...I have prepared food for thee before thou wast formed; acknowledge me, therefore, as thy Father, who have so diligently provided for thee when thou wast not yet created.” John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 96, 99

skeleton of all human communication, and by God's work of naming, He created the foundation of all society.¹² That's God's sixth work: He calls.

God works for His glory and the public good

So what do we learn from God's work? From His creating, cherishing, communicating, celebrating, classifying and calling? We learn God is worker! In the beginning God worked. What did God work for? First, God worked to display His immeasurable worth. This is His glory. God created the universe in order to have angels and humans beings behold Him, and admire Him. **Psalm 19:1** "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork." **Isaiah 43:7** "everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made." That's the first thing God worked for, His own glory. Secondly, God worked for the joy and flourishing of human society. This is so profoundly on display! What does God gain in creating the universe? How do things that are non-God add to the One who is from everlasting to everlasting? And so we must conclude that God created human society, and human flourishing, and human culture because He is good. Meaning, God is essentially and eternally disposed to communicate His happiness to beings other than God.¹³ That sums up why God worked and still works today. God works for the glory of God and the good of others. And this is what informs our work.

¹² God places a curse on the wicked promising that their names will be blotted out of remembrance—Psalm 34:16 (NIV).

¹³ Q. 42 What does it mean for God to be good? A. Being good means that God's eternal disposition is to communicate the happiness of Himself to all beings. [*Catechism on the Existence and Attributes of God* by Josh Bales; cf. Jonathan Edwards, *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards*, Ed. Harvey G. Townsend, (Eugene, OR,: WIPF & STOCK, 2009), pg. 194]

II. The Glory of Our Good Works

“Let us make man in our image”

After we have seen who God is in v.1-25, v.26 is like ripe fruit that falls right off the tree. “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our *image*, after our *likeness*.’” Those two words *likeness* and *image* convey **meaning** and **mission**.¹⁴ First, the word *likeness* conveys meaning. Man is made in the *likeness* of God. In other words, man is like God. God’s being gives *meaning* to man’s being. Who is God? Those six works show us who He is. God is creative, compassionate, communicative. God celebrates over others. He brings order out of chaos. He names and gives meaning to things that are not. That’s what it means to be human. To be like God. To work like God works.

Secondly, the word *image* conveys mission. An image is a copy. The purpose of an image is show us what the original is like. Images reflect the original. Why does the original—God—work? God works for the glory of God and the good of others. Therefore that is our primary mission here in Genesis 1—to work for the glory of God and for the good of others.¹⁵ And we can see this specifically in what God says next.

The cultural mandate

Look at v.28 “And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” I want to make six observations from this verse.

¹⁴ Calvin doesn’t see any substantial difference between these two words, saying “As for myself, before I define the image of God, I would deny that it differs from his likeness.” However, later Calvin says “‘Let us make,’ he says, ‘man in our image, according to our likeness,’ that is, that he may **be** like God [I would argue this is *meaning*], or may **represent** the image of God [I would argue this is *mission*].” John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 93-94

¹⁵ “As God’s image, we are made to reflect God’s glory back to him. In one sense, we do that by virtue of our creation. In another sense, to reflect that glory is a deliberate choice that we make or refuse to make.” John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life, A Theology of Lordship: Vol. 4*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 2008), pg. 302-303

First, we see that “work was part of paradise.”¹⁶ Work is not a necessary evil. That is an ancient Greek idea, not a Biblical one. Aristotle who had some really great things to say was totally wrong on this. He believed that “the ability to live without having to work—was a primary qualification for a genuinely worthwhile life.”¹⁷ I’m afraid that Americans love that idea, holding up retirement as the pinnacle of the American dream. But oh how this is wrong. Work was a part of paradise. Tim Keller says here “It was part of God’s perfect design for human life, because we were made in God’s image, and part of his glory and happiness is that he works, as does the Son of God, who said, ““My Father is *working* until now, and I am *working*”¹⁸ (**John 5:17**). That’s our first observation: Work was part of original paradise.

Second, “All human work is not *merely* a job but a calling”¹⁹ from God. In the New Testament, the Greek word for calling καλέω kaleō is most often used to describe God’s bringing a person unto Himself for salvation. “God is faithful, by whom you were called (καλέω) into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (**1 Cor. 1:9**). However, Paul also uses it to describe someone’s ordinary work. When he was helping the Corinthians come to terms with what it meant to be a Christian in their pagan culture, he didn’t tell them to quit their jobs, or leave their unbelieving spouses, or go into the ministry, He said in **1 Cor. 7:17** “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has *assigned* to him, and to which God has *called* him. This is my rule in all the churches.”²⁰ Think of that.

¹⁶ Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work*, (New York, NY.: Penguin Group, 2012), pg. 36

¹⁷ *ibid*, pg. 45

¹⁸ *ibid*, pg. 36

¹⁹ Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work*, (New York, NY.: Penguin Group, 2012), pg. 19

²⁰ John the Baptist understood this. Some who listened to him preach asked how they could bear fruit in keeping with repentance. **Luke 3:12-14** “Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”

God's calling a person to a ordinary job is described in the same way as God's calling them into salvation. There is no such thing as an ordinary job. All work is sacred, because God is the one who is calling you to it. That's our second observation: All human work is not *merely* a job but a calling from God.

Third, God's call is to replenish and rule the earth. **v.28** says "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." We see two parts here—replenishing and ruling—and these make up what's called the **cultural mandate**²¹. Nancy Pearcey says here "The first phrase, "be fruitful and multiply means to develop the **social world**: build families, churches, schools, cities, governments, laws. The second phrase: "subdue the earth," means to harness the **natural world**: "...plant crops, build bridges, design computers, compose music."²² Why would God want human beings to do these things? Because God wants to fill the earth with His goodness and this comes through human flourishing. Wayne Grudem says here "When we work to produce (for example) pairs of shoes from the earth's resources, God sees us imitating his attributes of wisdom, knowledge, skill, strength, creativity, appreciation of beauty, sovereignty, planning for the future and the use of language to communicate. In addition, when we produce pairs of shoes to be used by others, we demonstrate love for others, wisdom in understanding their needs, and interdependence and personal cooperation (which are reflections of God's Trinitarian existence)."²³ The cultural mandate was given so that the earth would be "filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (**Hab. 2:14**). That's our third observation: you have been called to make God known, and this comes by replenishing and ruling in the social and natural world.

²¹ The cultural mandate is God's command for all humans to develop the social and natural world for sake of human flourishing to God's glory

²² Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity From Its Cultural Captivity*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2008), pg. 47

²³ Quoted in Matt Perman's *What's Best Next: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done, Expanded Edition*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 2016), pg. 63

Fourth, this call completely destroys both cultural anorexia and cultural gluttony. First, the cultural mandate destroys cultural anorexia because God commands every part of civilization to be cultivated, not just the “sacred part.” What do we see God doing Genesis 1? He is an architect, a carpenter, an artist, a gardner, a farmer, a philosopher, a preacher, a caregiver, a parent, a sentry—all of these things are wrapped up in God’s works. And that is what God tells us to image forth in the world. The idea that some work is “sacred” and some work is “secular” is completely unbiblical. All work is sacred. Because God is the author of all work. As William Tyndale said “If we look externally, there is a difference between washing the dishes and preaching the word of God; but [when it comes to pleasing God, there is no difference at all].”²⁴ If anyone tells you that the *main* or *primary* reason that you should work is so that you can evangelize your co-workers or use your earned money for Christian causes, they aren’t don’t yet see this truth. Work is intrinsically good when it is done for the good of others to God’s glory, because that kind of work fulfills the cultural mandate. God-willing we’ll see how the cultural mandate relates to the great commission in a couple of weeks, but for now think about this: You should not got to work *merely* to try and convert people to Christ, but you should pursue your God-given calling to cultivate the sphere God has placed you in.²⁵ And watch what happens. The witness of Scripture is clear. We have the examples of Joseph and Daniel. Both called to “secular” leadership. They pursued their callings with excellence and dignity, and they won the respect of their pagan rulers, while improving society and the lives of those whom they exercised authority.²⁶

²⁴ Or as William Perkins said “The action of a shepherd in keeping sheep...is as good a work before God as is the action of a judge in giving sentence, or a magistrate in ruling, or a minister in preaching.” Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Zondervan, 1990), pg. 25

²⁵ Michael Horton, *Where in the World is the Church?: A Christian View of Culture and Your Role In It*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 2002), pg. 142-143

²⁶ *ibid*, pg. 192

But the cultural mandate also destroys cultural gluttony—that individualistic, pragmatic approach to consuming culture. The cultural mandate doesn't tell us to be self-centered consumers. It tells us replenish and rule. The pursuit of your own *private* success does not image for the generous heart that God exhibits in Genesis. Perhaps the greatest glory of God that we see in Genesis 1, more than His power of creating out of nothing, more than His intellectual prowess in inventing every nook and cranny of the universe is *His goodness*. God loves human flourishing. He loves to communicate His happiness to His creatures. That's what it means when God saw that it was good—He's saying "This will thrill my creation." That's our fourth observation: this call destroys cultural anorexia and cultural gluttony.

Fifth, this calling *is* the blessing. Look at how v. 28 starts—"And God blessed them. And God said to them..." When I read this at first, it gave me the impression that the blessing was something totally different. I like the way that the ISV translation reads. "God blessed the humans *by* saying to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it!"(ISV) This is the seventh work of God in Genesis 1. After He does all his work, He blesses us by telling us to go into the world and reflect Him in our work. The cultural mandate *is* the blessing. Think about it. God Himself could have *easily* populated the whole earth.²⁷ God could have *easily* created whole cities, whole infrastructures, whole communities, whole cultures, but He didn't. "God made the world to need work."²⁸ Why? Because God is generous. Work is the blessing. The command to replenish and rule *is* the blessing. We don't often feel that way often because sin has entered the world. God-willing we address that next week. For now, we have to see that God's calling us to work as He works is one of the greatest blessing of our lives. As C.S. Lewis once said "Our desire is not only to see glory

²⁷ "God could himself indeed have covered the earth with a multitude of men; but it was his will that we should proceed from one fountain, in order that our desire of mutual concord might be the greater, and that each might the more freely embrace the other as his own flesh." John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 97

²⁸ Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*, (New York, NY.: Penguin Group, 2012), pg. 57

but also to participate in the glory we see.”²⁹ As we work, Luther said, we wear the masks of God. Think about these masks of God in different types of work:

Creative-type work is a mask for God’s fashioning and forming work. This work includes painting, seamstresses, carpenters, architects, etc.

Providential-type work is a mask for God’s providing and sustaining work. This work includes government workers, farmers, repairmen, bankers, etc.

Redemptive-type work is a mask for God’s saving and reconciling work. This work includes pastoring, writing, counseling, song-writing, etc.

Justice-type work is a mask for God’s protecting and vindicating work. This work includes judges, paralegals, city managers, police officers, etc.

Revelatory-type work is a mask for God’s enlightening and educating work. This work includes scientists, scholars, journalists, teachers, etc.

Compassionate-type work is a mask for God’s comforting and healing work. This work includes doctors, psychologists, nonprofit directors, hospice care, etc.³⁰

All our work is meaningful, because through it, God is creating, providing, redeeming, bringing justice, teaching, revealing, and showing compassion to human society. That’s our fifth observation: this calling *is* the blessing.

Sixth, this call completely redefines how you do work. As one author has pointed out “Our culture has viewed work *primarily* as the means to wealth and possessions.”³¹ But this couldn’t be further from the truth. Money is not the

²⁹ C.S. Lewis from his sermon *The Weight of Glory* quoted in Matt Perman’s *What’s Best Next: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done, Expanded Edition*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 2016), pg. 63

³⁰ Adapted from Amy Sherman in *The Gospel For Life Series: The Gospel & Work*, Ed. Russell Moore and Andrew T. Walker, (Nashville, TN.: B&H Publishing Group, 2017), pg. 18

³¹ Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1990), pg. 29

primary thing that you need to survive, it's the work itself that you need.³² To work for the good of others to God's glory is what it means to be fully human. This type of work is what the Bible calls "good works." Jesus said in **Matthew 5:16** "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your *good works* and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." "Good works are not simply the rare, special, extraordinary, or super spiritual things we do. Good works are anything we do in faith."³³ Meaning, anytime you believe God and obey **Genesis 1:28** to replenish and rule the earth, that is a good work. Which is why Paul says that women who have babies and raise children have done good works (**1 Tim. 5:10**). Slaves or employees who obey their masters, "as servants of Christ" have done a good work (**Eph. 6:5-8**). As Matt Perman "The things you do every day are good works—whether that is going to meetings, delivering mail, designing bridges, creating financial reports, developing marketing plans, or making chicken sandwiches."³⁴ When done in faith for the good of others, this is fulfilling the cultural mandate. You can be doing good works 7 days a week. That's our sixth observation: this call completely redefines how you work.

This is the glory of your good works. We return to the questions we began with: Why is work a blessing? Because in your work you are participating in God's glory. He is using your work for the flourishing of human society. Secondly, why is work *necessary* for a fulfilled life? Because to work for the good of others to God's glory is what it means to be fully human.

³² The Puritan William Perkins has said "the main end of our lives...is to serve God in the serving of men in the works of our callings...Some man will say perchance: What, must we not labor in our callings to maintain our families? I answer: this must be done: but this is not the scope and end of our lives. The true end of our lives is to do service to God in serving of man." Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Zondervan, 1990), pg. 30

³³ Matt Perman, *What's Best Next: How the Gospel Transforms the Way You Get Things Done, Expanded Edition*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Zondervan, 2016), pg. 77

³⁴ *ibid*, pg. 79

Application

Our Duty: Fulfill the cultural mandate

There are great resources out there today that can help you with vocation, especially you teenagers as you begin thinking about what's next. Here are the important questions you need to ask about vocation. The question is not "What job will make *me* the most money, fulfill *me* the most, give *me* the greatest reputation?" Rather the questions are "Will this work glorify God?³⁵ How can I with my existing abilities³⁶ and opportunities be of the greatest service to other people?³⁷ Do I consider myself called to do this work?"³⁸ One of the ways you can discover calling is to examine what you are good at. When God calls you to a vocation, He gives you the gifts necessary to that calling. Also you should ask "Will this work provide for myself and my family?"

The good news with this perspective of vocation is that it now you can see all of life as worship. Your work is not meaningless. You are not a second-class christian because you are not in "the ministry." All work is ministry. Worship is

³⁵ Richard D. Phillips, *The Masculine Mandate, God's Calling To Men*, (Orlando, FL.: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2010), pg. 21. Also cf. John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life, A Theology of Lordship: Vol. 4*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 2008), pg. 312-313 for more guidelines for how vocation comes to us.

³⁶ "God gave the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 not to Adam and Eve as individuals, but to them as a corporate family, including their descendants. Adam could not have filled or subdued the earth as an individual. Only the human race as a whole could have any hope of carrying out the mandate...So my individual responsibility is not to subdue the earth or to disciple all the nations. It is, rather, to find a specific role, for which God has gifted me, that will contribute to this results." John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life, A Theology of Lordship: Vol. 4*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 2008), pg. 228-229

³⁷ Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Word to God's Work*, (New York, NY.: Penguin Group, 2012), pg. 67

³⁸ The Puritans preferred to trust such things as a person's "inward endowments and inclinations," "outward circumstances which may lead...to one course of life rather than another," the advice of "parents, guardians, and in some cases magistrates," and "nature, education, or gifts...acquired. They also believed that if people were in the right calling, God would equip them to perform their work: "When God hath called me to a place, he hath given me some gifts for the place." Leland Ryken, *Worldly Saints: The Puritans As They Really Were*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Zondervan, 1990), pg. 28-29

not just on Sunday mornings, it is throughout the whole week. A true understanding of vocation helps us to see that all of life is worship.

However, we do live in a post-fall world. Sin has corrupted your work. So to hear that you must consider that your work is *not* for your selfish ends; to hear that you are bound to do all the good you can for others; to hear that you are to use your resources for human flourishing and God's glory; is to hear all your failures. The cultural mandate is good. But you are not. So what is our solution?

Our Doctrine: Jesus fulfilled the cultural mandate

The cultural mandate foreshadows Jesus Christ even *before* the fall just as marriage does. We know that in Genesis 2, God gives Eve to Adam and the institution of marriage begins. And this comes *before* the fall. But this was God's way of promising something better than human marriage—the marriage between Christ and the church. The Apostle Paul tells us that marriage is a profound mystery, because “it refers to Christ and the church.” (**Ephesians 5:32**). Meaning God created human marriage *after* He had already conceived of the marriage of Christ to the church. So the first marriage, even though it happened *before* the fall, pointed to Jesus Christ.

The same thing is true about the cultural mandate. It foreshadows the work of the gospel.³⁹ The two main commands of the cultural mandate *pre-fall* is 1) that humanity would fill the earth *as a means* of creating worshippers of God⁴⁰ and 2) that all of the earth would be subdued for human flourishing *as a means* of spreading God's dominion. We are called to work to those to ends—to spread God's presence in humanity, and to spread God's dominion over the earth. What

³⁹ “Christ is himself the promised seed, the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. He fills all things with his presence (Eph. 1:23; 4:10). And he takes title to all lands in God's creation (Matthew 28:18).” John Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life, A Theology of Lordship: Vol. 4*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 2008), pg. 309

⁴⁰ “For [God] has joined the man to his wife, that they might produce a divine, that is, a legitimate seed.” John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries Vol. 1*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 98

did Jesus accomplish in the gospel? 1) Jesus is the only One who fills the earth with worshippers of God through His work on the cross. **Ephesians 1:23** says that through the church Jesus “fills all in all.” 2) Jesus is the only One who can subdue all the power of sin, and death and the devil, and therefore all of earth itself. **Matthew 28:19** “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” The cultural mandate is not a mirror for our performance, it is a window into the performance of Jesus Christ. “When Jesus came, he said, “I am working and my father’s working” (**John 5:17**). And we are saved through Jesus’ work, not ours...Christ is the climax of the image—he is the ultimate worker, as it were.”⁴¹ Jesus exchanged all His righteous work for all your sinful work. Jesus exchanged all His God-glorifying work for all your God-belittling work. Jesus exchanged all His human-flourishing work for all your self-centered work. Jesus was punished on the cross for your sin of refusing to pursue the cultural mandate, and you are rewarded with His righteousness of fulfilling it. Dear believer, rest in that. That Jesus has already fulfilled the cultural mandate when He said “It is finished.” The work is done.

If you have not trusted in Christ, the Bible says that all of your good works are actually *filthy rags*—that’s a Hebrew expression for menstrual cloths (**Isaiah 64:6**). Dear unbeliever, why does God describe you “good works” like that? Because sin is mixed in with your best everyday obedience to your boss, your paying the bills, and your creativity, your labor and has turned it inward so that you aren’t doing those things for God’s glory and the true good of others. That’s how God defines good works. But if you trust Jesus Christ, then His good works become yours.

Our Delight: You are Jesus’ workmanship

What did Jesus accomplish in His work? You! **Ephesians 2:10** “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (cf. **2 Cor. 5:17**). What this

⁴¹ Timothy Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism*, (New York, NY.: Viking, 2015), pg. 81-82

means is that whatever situation you currently find yourself in, that is what you are currently called to. At prayer night on Wednesday night, we had a thrilling conversation about how a banker who fixes computer code is fulfilling the cultural mandate. As he fixes code he is bringing order to disorder, just like Christ brought righteousness to sin in the gospel, or God brought form out of a formless earth. Also this code-fixing is for human flourishing, because he saves both the bank and the customer time to pursue their own callings, which is a way of loving your neighbor as yourself. On top of those grand pursuits, he gets paid for it.

And this thinking ought to be applied to every type of work. Perhaps you are a home-schooling mom. How does your work reflect God's greater work? You are putting meaning in the universe of your children's mind—just as God put meaning into the earth when He separated and gathered and called. And you are discipling your children in Christ for the benefit not only of them but for all human society.

Or perhaps you are not in the “workforce” because you are disabled or are chronically sick. How does your current situation reflect God's greater work? **Philippians 1:29** says “For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also *suffer* for his sake,” God grants suffering to people as a *work*—because suffering was the main part of Jesus' *work*. So suffer to the glory of God. That's your calling. That you would not lose hope in Christ. That speaks volumes of God's glory, and it causes human flourishing because then world sees a suffering person still trust in Christ, it's like a man who hands out hope like it's candy in his pocket.

Dear congregation, you are Christ's workmanship. Be free. Why should you not freely, and joyfully, give yourself over to your work for the good of others to the glory of God? That is what Jesus has done for you. Work from that foundation. Christ's work has already been accepted, so now work knowing that none of your labor is in vain in the Lord (1 **Cor. 15:58**).

