

Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity: Luke 10:23–37

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There are now cracks in that demographic glass ceiling, and the diamond-edged glass-cutter is the music of J.S. Bach. As Uwe Siemon-Netto reminds us, it was two hundred fifty years ago that Bach, almost completely blind, abandoned work on “The Art of the Fugue” and dictated his last chorale to a son-in-law; its German title, translated, is “Before thy throne I come herewith.” Then he died. His incomparable work continues to enrich human culture, and as this devoutly pious Lutheran would have wished, his music is bringing men and women to Christ.

See also: Colson Report (attached).

What does this mean? Not just music. You don't know what you're doing and you can't judge by outward appearances. You never know. Bach was faithful to his vocation. Bach didn't know that he would be evangelizing tens of thousands of Japanese people. I think mothers have as much potential as Bach. Think of the women in the world today who think they have a lesser vocation because they are mothers.

Think of what would happen if you did your vocation, everything you do, totally as unto the Lord.

To be cut off from relationship to your heavenly father is death. To be cut off from His Son and the church is the same thing - death.

Ephes. 2:1 (KJV) And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Romans 3:10-18 (KJV) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: [11] There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. [12] They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. [13] Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: [14] Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: [15] Their feet are swift

to shed blood: [16] Destruction and misery are in their ways: [17] And the way of peace have they not known: [18] There is no fear of God before their eyes.

If this isn't to be an abstraction, you must realize that there is one of you that this applies to.

How many times have you taken things out of the context in which they were spoken because of your own agenda - to save your life?

Romans 3:19 (KJV) Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

You're under the law if you judge your brother according to the law, according to the outward things. You then come under the same judgment. God has made it clear, so that your mouth and my mouth would be stopped and all the world become guilty before God. Be not deceived, God doesn't look at the outward. What you did, you did with all the wrong motives.

Ephes. 2:1-6 (KJV) And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; [2] Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: [3] Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. [4] But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, [5] Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) [6] And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:

Ephes. 2:10 (KJV) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Good works, whatever we thought they were, had nothing to do with righteousness. We were on that ladder, trying to be somebody. If we only knew a little more than the next guy, prayed a little longer, or gave little more, we could be somebody. God has made that all foolishness.

Ephes. 2:13-14 (KJV) But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. [14] For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;

The prodigal was far off, but you have been made near. We have been restored to the relationship Christ has with his Father.

Ephes. 2:15-17 (KJV) Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; [16] And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: [17] And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

It is finished. Now what?

Gerhard O. Forde, Theology is for Proclamation, Chapter 5

It is simply the fact that God has done it all, that there is nothing to do. This is impossible for us to take as old beings. That is the stone of stumbling, the rock of offense. Our whole being is staked on our god-project, our upward rebellion, our attempt one way or another to take our destiny into our own hands, to do something to establish our being or realize our destiny. The shock of the Word utterly unnerves us and calls everything we are and hope to be into question. The shock of the “nothing to do” is just incredible to us. We sputter and fume because, quite literally, we do not know what to do with it. But the sputtering and fuming is the death rattle of the Old Adam.

One way or another, the “nothing to do” spells death. The Old Adam may, of course, think to take advantage of the situation. Since there is forgiveness, since there is nothing to do, we may exchange this liberty for license, try desperately to realize some kind of destiny by a life of self-indulgence. But that only means that the Old Adam has not died to sin and so shall die the death of sin from which there is no return. But that is depressing business and one does best by spending as little time with it as possible. Paul usually just gives such positions the back of his hand by saying, “Their condemnation is just.”

The reason why we cannot take the proclamation of this Word is that here the Old Adam and Eve sense themselves to be under the most radical and final attack. Here the rebellion is countered and checked most totally and directly. As old beings we had hoped to get by with the ruse that our problem was only one of a greater or lesser degree of weakness or lack of resolve and fortitude in carrying out our projects. That is why it is most often precisely in the church where indignation reaches its highest pitch. For old beings repair to the church to look for help when their projects begin to falter or sag or collapse, expecting to be “affirmed” in their

quest. It is in the church, as Barth once put it, that the “god sickness” breaks out most virulently. To be met with the announcement that there is nothing to do is the most devastating of all. “We do have to do something, don’t we?” comes the incessant and plaintive cry. “Don’t we have anything to say about it?” We hope to keep our projects going or even to find more worthy ones. But now our projects are suddenly wiped out. The Old Adam and Eve are themselves directly attacked and wiped out. The rebellion is countered by rendering it pointless. The reason why this is so offensive to us as old beings is because we no doubt sense that there is nothing left now but to be the creatures God made!

While you were afar off, yet sinners, enemies, he completely did you in. Now it is no longer you, but a new creation. In that sense, there is nothing left to do. Let it sink in. Let it disturb you. What would you do tomorrow morning? When the “nothing left to do” becomes reality, the fun can begin.

The old self is through, drowned in the gracious water and drawn out to say, Yes. This is the divine yes and the calling to our yes in the spirit. Awake O sleeper. “Come out of your stinking tomb (the old Adamic way of thinking). You are free to reject it. The last desperate line of defense of the old being, “You mean I have to have a vocation now, bring forth fruit, do good works, commanded to love now?” Yes, but it is a crazy commandment. This is my commandment that ye love one another that your joy may be full.”

How many of you have suffered loving your family? Non-Christians suffer also, but that is not suffering as a Christian, because you take a stand. If a man in the world is lazy and doesn't go to work, what happens? He suffers. Sometimes it's unexplainable and he can't understand it. You'd think we'd have compassion on sinners.

Everyone in the world suffers. We’re losers and we don't like being losers, and we don't like God losing either.

Romans 12:1 (KJV) I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

Because you've received the mercy of God, give your body to the Lord. Inasmuch as you give it to the least of the brethren, you give it to the Lord. When you love the brethren that your joy will be full. What brings you down is you. The biggest need you have is to give. If you don't die daily, eventually physical death will do to you what you could have done daily.

Out of the foundation of your justification by grace, present your body as a living sacrifice. Once you've received the robe and the ring and the kiss of the Father, you get to lay your body down as a living sacrifice. From God's perspective it is finished. He is the author and finisher. Once you know that, any reason you have to climb any ladders is made futile, pointless.

Beware of questions. "Why does a Rabbi answer a question with a question? Answer: Why shouldn't he?"

Jesus answered the certain lawyer with a question. Deut 19:18 - in the Old Testament.

Luke 10:25-29 (KJV) And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? [26] He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? [27] And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. [28] And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. [29] But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

I don't think anyone in this room would ever say with a sincere heart, "Who is the neighbor I'm supposed to love?" Questions like this evoke stories from Jesus. You don't think he talks direct to people, do you?

Who is my neighbor? Jesus has a story.

Luke 10:30 (KJV) And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

These are pregnant statements, depending on how you hear.

Luke 10:31-33 (KJV) And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. [32] And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. [33] But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

Samaritans were hated of Jews.

Luke 10:34-35 (KJV) And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. [35] And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said

unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

The guy in the ditch is a loser, and a Samaritan is always a loser. Wouldn't this be a losing thing to do?

Luke 10:36-37 (KJV) Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? [37] And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

Have you ever passed by a person who is wounded or in despair? It's easy to justify your actions. Everyone has had their robe stolen from time to time. But we're still strong enough even then to think that we don't need help.

Who are you in the story? Which one would you like to be? Lawyer, Levite, Priest, Samaritan? This parable is not about how we are to live. It is about losers. Jesus was left for dead. Inasmuch as you minister to the least of the brethren, when you see them sick or in prison (right here in this room), you do it as unto Christ. Love is the fulfillment of the law. You could call this a story. The man wants to escape by doing the law. What must I do to inherit eternal life? Wishing to justify himself. Think of that. Do you know anyone like that?

Love your enemies. How many of you have trouble loving your very family? Christ's love in you loves the unlovely. We naturally love people who are useful, whose approval or acceptance we want. To discern means to understand your purpose. If you have an organ in your body that has shut down, do you think it would affect your other organs? There is a reason Paul, and the Holy Ghost, uses this metaphor - the body.

Matthew 5:43-46 (KJV) Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. [44] But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; [45] That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. [46] For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

Imagine a hearse going down the street with a U-Haul behind it. And yet we spend our days worrying about our things.

Luke 12:16-18 (KJV) And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: [17] And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? [18] And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

What do you trust in? Your savings account?

1 Tim. 6:17-18 (KJV) Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; [18] That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate;

"Well, I'd like to give, but I don't have enough." How many people do you love? The only thing that matters is your neighbor. In loving your neighbor you are seeking the kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is love and love seeketh not its own. 1 Cor 13. Knowledge can be a way to escape the cross, but in vocation you find the cross. If you're a mother, your crosses come all the time. Holding your sick baby. If you're a father, it's all the time.

Not discerning the Body, they die. "Well, I'm a law unto myself."

Luke 12:13-15 (KJV) And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. [14] And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you? [15] And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Beware of covetousness.

James 4:1-3 (KJV) From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? [2] Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. [3] Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

Luke 16:1 (KJV) And he said also unto his disciples, There was a certain rich man, which had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.

Are there any prodigals here? How many of you wasted your goods?

Luke 16:2-12 (KJV) And he called him, and said unto him, How is it that I hear this of thee? give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward. [3] Then the

steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. [4] I am resolved what to do, that, when I am put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. [5] So he called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? [6] And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. [7] Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and write fourscore. [8] And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. [9] And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations. [10] He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. [11] If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? [12] And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?

Do you want to know what to do with money? He didn't say to serve mammon, he said to use it. All things are freely yours, but not for you to be used by, as an idol. All the time, the natural man, Adam in you thinks that removing things external is the solution. If you want to get a Christmas tree or candy canes, you are free in Christ to do or not do whatever you want. You do far worse than that and no one ostracizes you. What is Christmas about? Unto us a child is born. Shepherds know the story. Egyptians, even in this church, don't like shepherds. Shepherds might nudge the sheep sometimes. "You might fall off the cliff."

Long hair for a woman who lived at the time the scriptures were written was a sign that she was a covered woman. If your husband is not the head of the house, why do you have a husband? Christ baptizes the church, the woman, the bride, every day. This is how husbands are to love their wives. We speak of a mystery - Christ and the Church. If you're a woman and you don't want to be covered, if the Word of God is not mediating every relationship of your life, why bother? If, after the meeting, you can't wait to leave you prove to your children what is important to you. There are easier places you could be where no one would say it is your fault.

How about you? Is Christ born in you this day? Have you conceived the Word of God today? Have you been baptized? Has something new come out of the water of God's Word, the

sacraments with the Word added? I believe in the communion of saints. I believe in the resurrection.

What is the road to Emmaus? A place of talking about the things that have happened. I want to know who the people in this story are. I want to know why Jesus can't be recognized. Why couldn't they recognize Christ? Could it be that he comes in vessels like you, earthen vessels, vessels that still have a flesh? The road to Emmaus is about reasonings and being sad.

Our eyes are closed so that we wouldn't know Him should he show up. He was born in a manger so that couldn't be him. It couldn't be him because he let that woman wash his feet. It couldn't be him because he didn't turn rocks into bread. They are reasoning and they are sad. What are they reasoning about and what are they sad about?

Luke 24:13-21 (KJV) And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. [14] And they talked together of all these things which had happened. [15] And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. [16] But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. [17] And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad? [18] And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? [19] And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: [20] And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him. [21] But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

How many things have you trusted in and called them Jesus, up until now? Maybe you don't even bother calling it Jesus anymore. Don't trust in riches or man, or your own understanding. Your own reasonings, Luther called the great harlot. That kind of reasoning has an agenda. Jesus will be a threat to that kind of reasoning. But if you keep him as a babe under the Christmas tree, he won't be a threat to you. Just keep him there and consume a lot of stuff and that will make you happy. This is what the world wants - to keep you a babe so you won't get your inheritance. As long as you're a child you're no different than a slave, a servant. Growth is not a matter of time. Sometimes I've seen men get inspired with one idea, one little seed, and it changes their whole life - they're off on their destiny.

Luke 24:22-26 (KJV) Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; [23] And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. [24] And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not. [25] Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: [26] Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

When you become a disciple of Jesus you are given a cross. The suffering you have as a Christian will be because of Christ. You will be an offense.

Hannah was bitter because she was barren.

1 Samuel 1:9-28 (KJV) So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord. [10] And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. [11] And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head. [12] And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. [13] Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. [14] And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. [15] And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunken neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. [16] Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. [17] Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him. [18] And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad.

[19] And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her. [20] Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord. [21] And the man Elkanah, and all his house, went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice, and his vow. [22] But Hannah went not up; for she said

unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord, and there abide for ever. [23] And Elkanah her husband said unto her, Do what seemeth thee good; tarry until thou have weaned him; only the Lord establish his word. So the woman abode, and gave her son suck until she weaned him.

[24] And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh: and the child was young. [25] And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. [26] And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord. [27] For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: [28] Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.

If you're a parent, you really want to check this scripture out.

My horn is my mouth - my mouth is exalted. Salvation is fruit.

1 Samuel 2:1-10 (KJV) And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. [2] There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. [3] Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. [4] The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. [5] They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble. [6] The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. [7] The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up. [8] He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory: for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them. [9] He will keep the feet of his saints, and the wicked shall be silent in darkness; for by strength shall no man prevail. [10] The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed.

Hannah lent her son to the Lord. The same with Abraham, the father of faith. It is better to give everything we have to the Lord and let him have it. If you have a car, give it to the Lord.

If you have a bank account, give it to the Lord. You'll never have to worry about them if they are the Lord's. God gives us all things to enjoy.

Remember Peter saying, "May it never be..." Peter saw that Jesus was going to have to suffer and knew that he would have to also. Christians think it strange concerning the trials that come to them. I'm still on earth because God has a plan. Love is the fulfillment of the law.

Here is a man who rebuked them for their unbelief and then he began to expound to them the scripture and their hearts burned and they constrained him. Sometimes I don't want to be around people who don't constrain me. How about you? Do you like to be around people who don't constrain you? Sometimes children don't value what they are given too easily.

Luke 24:27-35 (KJV) And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. [28] And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further. [29] But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. [30] And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. [31] And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. [32] And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures? [33] And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, [34] Saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. [35] And they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread.

Who is the stranger? He is the same as the babe that could be born again in your womb. Emanuel - God with us. The Word of God was born in something low - the handmaid of the Lord in her low estate. I'm the innkeeper, filled up and entertaining other guests, those more influential than you. Could you be the stranger that the Word of God or Emanuel shows up in? Celebrate Christmas then. You'll light up. Isn't that what Rebekah did when she saw Isaac?

Turn around. You've slid backwards. You're thinking about yourself - your Jesus, the losing church and Jesus that let you down. It wasn't the Jesus you wanted. Keep the law, do good things - will that give you consolation? Imagine what consolation the world gives.

They could not go the right way until they heard the Gospel, until they saw the resurrection. It's in the breaking of the bread - breaking open the Word, the Word expounded upon by you

or anyone, that they see him. All of his disciples were offended and left him, until they saw the resurrection - the Word in front of them expounded.

How will they see that it is no longer you who live? Vocation. What is your vocation? Vocation is the place where you die. Children don't even see their parents, only their hands. You are no longer babes. Part of your vocation is to put up with this.

From book: The Church and Christian Vocation by Gustaf Wingren, Page 282

The old man does not want to die unto the world of sin; he wants to live in it. God must help man to die daily. Therefore God has ordained sundry orders and vocations, wherein man is to exercise himself and learn to bear up. Here vocation enters. From the beginning, as early as 1519, Luther viewed it in its eschatological setting, and as the fulfillment of baptism. Vocation applies primarily to the old man, reluctant to face suffering and death. its mission is to discipline him. But this is the mission which is everywhere ascribed to the law by Luther. so when the same is here said as to vocation, that fact is indicative as to his concept of the law.

The task of the church is precisely to proclaim the Word of God; and the word of God is both law and gospel. The gospel is a word of promise as to a kingdom without the tyranny of the law, without sin and death – the kingdom of the resurrection. But the law is at home in this world where sin and death are found. Here the kingdom of the world holds sway. Because men are not good, it must rule severely. The kingdom is the same as the law. Thus when the church proclaims both gospel and law, what it say sis relevant to two wholly different kingdoms. Through the gospel, on the one hand, it opens a way to the eternal kingdom of the resurrection. Through the proclamation of the law, on the other hand, it pronounces judgment on the corruptible world. God is at work in the external realm too. He has introduced into creation the temporal sword and the whole range of orders, offices, and vocations. It was not Christ who introduced them. He came to a world where the law was already at work. His kingdom is not of this world. But before he sent his Son, God was at work in his created world. He raised the law and worldly orders as a barrier against sin. But they did not change the hearts of men; only Christ and his gospel can do that. The law is rather to hold iniquity within tolerable bounds, to check the too destructive assertion of selfishness.

The worldly kingdom, which rules on earth independently of the church, has the function of compelling the individual to have regard to the welfare of others, whether he likes it or not. In the home the father is compelled to provide for wife and child, the children are required to

obey and serve their parents. The craftsman must have regard to the good of the customer if he is to be able to live. The ruler must look after the well-being of his subjects lest there be rebellion. The subject must obey law and statute if he would not be punished. However, each of these may feel in his heart, he must do that which is good for others. God is at work in both family and state as well as in the heart of man. The law is embodied in outward orders just as the gospel is incorporated in external elements – in water, bread, and wine. Faith in vocation and the doctrine of the sacraments are thus related, even as are creation and incarnation.

In the very fact of his life on earth man thus lives under the constant pressure of God's law. But as long as he has only the law, he is capable of neither faith nor love. His outward conduct is constrained by God, even while he is inwardly unwilling. But then the gospel comes as the message of salvation by the mercy of God, as the promise of Christ's eternal kingdom in the resurrection world. Only then does man realize that God is love. Even that which God does in his law and his wrath is an expression of his love concealed behind its opposite. It is that all men may serve all, that God lays on us the compulsion of his law. God sustains fallen creation with the very regimen which he enforces in love, making use of the very severity of existence. So the law is in this way an expression of God's love. But it is also an expression of that love in another respect. It demonstrates his love even for the man who would reject the law if he could but is constrained by it. God loves not only him who is benefited by the good deed which I do under compulsion; his love for me is evident in the very constraint that is laid on me. For it is in the moment when the gospel proclaims and demonstrates God's love that the depravity of man is truly revealed. Then for the first time man really knows himself as a sinner. It is by the gospel that he sees this. But it is also by the gospel that the door is opened to the heavenly kingdom, in which there shall be no sin. Sin is to be crucified and slain on the earth that thereby man is prepared for heaven. But it is by the law that the body of sin is put to death. By the hardships of one's vocation. When God disciplines one, he does so to give one eternal life. So in this way too the law is an expression of God's love, hidden behind its opposites.

Only he who has heard the gospel can see the law in this light. Only he who trusts in the promise of the resurrection can endure the crucifixion. Only he whose hope lives in heaven can stand up under the fact that the world is what it is. The power of all this lies in the fact of the new man, born of the gospel, born of Christ, born of the church. if man were really totally new here in time then all vocation could be done away, even as fanatics, falsely persuaded of their holiness, do abolish it together with all worldly regimen. For through faith Christ lives

in the heart, and he is God's own creative love. But with faith the Holy Spirit is given, and in the Holy Spirit one loves one's neighbor, purposes his well-being, and bears his burdens. But this is the same as that at which compulsion of God's law aims, apart from man's regeneration. Now when regeneration has taken place, love is present. God is present, creative and effective within man through the Holy spirit and the gospel. The good is done without the command of the law. The son in the family does not act because the father commands; of his own volition he does all that would be required of him, and more. The father is surprised, and command is not needed. For the new man there is no law; on the contrary, he suffuses it with a new character, making it living and new. Thus God makes his world new through the gospel, faith, and the Holy Spirit. It is doubtless true that even on the earthly plane the door is never closed to new impulses. For the natural man, who has not heard the gospel, is also an instrument in God's hand, through whom God transforms the status of men. This is particularly true of men of great stature, *virii heroici*. Reason and moderation may go beyond the written law. But above all other things, is love born of faith which is the great transformer, a door through which God enters into the world to change family, business, legislation, government. This he does, not by changing the externals, but by the regeneration. of those who occupy this position or that. Thus in faith, in the Holy Spirit, in the new man, vocation is supplanted by a spontaneous, new creation. If man were a wholly new creature, so that he held back nothing in his love to his neighbor, all earthly government could be dispensed with, so far as it applies to the Christian. This is the line of thought we meet in Luther's treatise, *On Secular Authority*.

But it is a central point in Luther's thought that a believer is at the same time both justified and yet a sinner. Through-out life he is both old man and new. So, in so far as he is still "old," he is still under vocation. This was the reason for the fact of vocation, as Luther affirmed it in his sermon on baptism, in 1519. As long as unwillingness and resentment fill me, in the presence of hardships and opposition, as long as I resist the demand that I serve thankless people, I am a sinner and there is still need for the vocation which constrains me to serve others whether I want to or not. Apart from the renewal of the heart, love for one's neighbor is realized at least in an outward way, and the old man is put to death. This is true mortification for it truly goes against him. It is not by his own choice, as when a monk in his supposed mortification goes to his fasts and self-denials. The true mortification comes from without, from neighbors and rulers and spouse and children. That is to say that it comes from God, who is at work in all these relationships. But while the old man is thus being disciplined, the

new man is exercised in faith. In one trial after another faith in God breaks through, nurtured by Word and sacrament which the church ceaselessly proffers to him who is being tried. In such manner the old man is crucified and the new man is raised, day by day, as life moves on toward the death of the body, which is the final elimination of the old and the triumph of the new.

But up to this point we have not presented the crux of Luther's thought in this connection. We must now come to the very kernel of Luther's view as to vocation and the church.

Christ is a man subject to external relations, to Pilate and to Herod, i.e. he is under the law. This humiliation of Christ is deepest at Calvary, where he bears the wrath of God, which is bound to the law. His divinity seems effaced when the crucifixion ends with his death and extermination. It looked as if he were only a man who was there undone.

"But," says Luther in his commentary on Galatians, "because he was a divine and eternal Person, he could not be held by death. Therefore he arose on the third day, and lives forever." this is the victory which is grasped by faith. The resurrection is the victory of the gospel over the law, of life over death. It is the revelation of the divine nature which was hidden in the crucifixion and concealed in the human. Crucifixion and death are the way to the resurrection. But as the gospel is bound up with the resurrection of Christ – apprehended as the revelation of the victory which love won on the cross – so the church is bound up with the resurrection of Christ. To believe that Christ is risen from the dead and continues his work is the same as to confess that "I believe in the holy church."

In this connection it is vital to see that the resurrection of Christ did not abolish worldly government. his resurrection is bodily; so the work of the Risen one – the church – is also carried on with outward means, the Word and the sacraments. The outward life of man continues to be lived under the authority of rulers, masters, parents, and lords. Law continues to rule on earth. The gospel belongs "to heaven," as Luther so often says.

Thus we come again to the status of the new man. The new man is victory over the law and dominion over the law, God's own sovereign presence on earth. One would perhaps have expected that the compulsion of vocation and worldly government be done away from the Christian. But he is still under vocation. So we come to the resurrection of Christ and the work of the Risen One in the church, through the Word and the sacrament in which God is himself present in our midst, living and regenerating. One would expect that governments

and rulers surrender their powers where God himself is present, in the church. But earthly government continues. There is more than a parallel here. It is the same truth in both cases. The new man is Christ. It is he who arises again in faith, and lives in man through Word and sacrament, through the church which is his resurrection body. But vocation continues despite the new man, and earthly governments continue despite the church. For both the new man and the church are eschatological realities. Both are really Christ's risen life and that is eschatological. The resurrection is the transition from the earth on which the cross stands, where Christ is trampled underfoot, to heaven where he rules as King. In his lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews Luther speaks in like manner about the transition from the old man to the new, and of our bodily death which is our entry into eternal life.

Thus we see the identity or close relationship between the five concepts: the resurrection of Christ, the church, the gospel, the new man, and heaven. Over against these stand the other five related concepts: the cross of Christ, vocation, the law, the old man, and the world. The old man must be crucified by the law, which belongs to the earthly life. We are disciplined in our vocation, in work, and the demands of the life of society. Vocation is earthly, just as shockingly earthly as the humanity of Christ which appears devoid of all divinity. The cross of Christ shows this humility whose only victory is love for one's neighbor; but in this victory, which looks so poor, God is hidden. Therefore the resurrection follows. In like manner through much offense the old man is led by his vocation through the humbling rigors of his service to his neighbor; but through faith in the gospel he arises as a new man, born of the church, and in hope possessed of eternal life and heaven. On the one hand, it can thus be said that the church, through the Word and the sacrament, is the means of the believer's union with Christ as the Risen one. on the other hand, it may just as truly be said that his vocation, in the customary earthly sense of the term, is the means of the believer's union with Christ as the Crucified One. This is the relation between the church and vocation. Christ is crucified and risen. Man is sinner and justified. He belongs both to earth and to heaven. Therefore both law and gospel are addressed to him. Therefore he lives both under vocation and in the church.

By this fact, light is shed on one aspect of Luther's concept of the church, at which we hinted in our introduction. In the body of our discussion we have said that the message of the church is the gospel.

How many of you have received help with your family? That's good news - the gospel. The church is the voice, the mouth-house, the mouth of God that proclaims the gospel that you are justified by trusting the Lord.

This is true, since the gospel is the particular mark of the church: we meet the gospel nowhere else than in the church.

There are some lone rangers who are cut off. They think they are still a branch connected to the tree and may even have some apples on it, but it is cut off and dying. If you don't function you begin to lose your edge and become dull. If you have children, I wouldn't worry about it because you will be called on every day.

The proclamation of the law is an inclusion of all orders and vocations in the church. This means that the church and vocation are realities which are inseparable. Vocation is relevant to the church. For only the gospel discerns the meaning of the law; only the resurrection explains the cross; only heaven enlightens the world. Without the church vocation would really not be a calling, but a form of the condemnation which the law brings. On the other hand, the church would not be the church if it did not proclaim the fact of vocation.

If anything would distinguish the difference between boys or men. When I was a boy, I came and went as I pleased. You're not a boy or a girl anymore.

God tricked you. He gave you a child to love.

We are already seated in the eschatological realm of eternity. But he left us with a body. What if the finger said it didn't belong to the body? What if your pancreas refused to function or supply whatever the pancreas supplies? Supply or die. In other words, you get to love your neighbor. You get your joy to be full. He who loves his neighbor fulfills the law so you are not condemned under the law.

What does it mean to have a vocation? Here's what we thought when we were children: "I should be an apostle." "Maybe I could get sent out." This is never the case anymore. In my own opinion, vocations center you. If love is the fulfillment of every law, and you want to get God off your back, like me, every day, then be about your vocation. Anyone trying to run to something more attractive is a theologian of glory. I understand running from the cross - I do it a thousand times a day. The greater news is that I am forgiven and you can be forgiven now. It's hard to receive forgiveness, however, for something you didn't do. Love builds up, love

washes, so those who are about their vocation, proclaiming liberty throughout the land, Jesus Christ's forgiveness of all sins are loving their neighbor.

Would' it be weird if you looked at your child and wanted to run from him/her because of the cross that child would be in your life? "Don, this is working together for your good." "But God, couldn't this work together for _____ good?"

You don't even choose your vocation. Robert Frost understood vocation better than most Christian: "The woods are lovely dark and deep, but I've got promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep." There are places you'd like to be in life, but you've made promises to yourself to love someone. Because of what Christ has done, you will find this your greatest joy, the thing you would prefer above all things - loving your neighbor. If you train your children to love their neighbor, then your whole family will be united in loving your neighbor - vocation. Since this is the only point of your life now, and everything else is pointless, the only thing we as a church are called to do is to proclaim the gospel, the good news, to love our neighbor starting here. How will the world know - by your love for one another, your children, and your children's children? I have more children than the stars, if you can hear me.

Page 117 of Peculiar Speech. "And one of the greatest gifts children can give parents is the reassurance that the source and significance of their lives is not totally dependent upon the competency or goodness of the parents."

Maturity in a child is when they let their parents know that how their parents raise them isn't going to be the big thing to determine how they come out. My parents aren't the sole source of my identity. You have a new father and that should be our identity.

Christ saved you while you were yet a sinner. Your life becomes good news to your neighbor. Your kindness becomes the gospel to your neighbor. Your willingness, even though you don't measure up, becomes good news to your neighbor.

If you're here, and if anybody is in your presence, you should assume every person you meet always needs to hear absolution - the truth of God - all your sins are absolved this day for Christ's sake.

Even in your work, how many people have been able to evangelize? Your life, wherever you go, people know you. Imagine if the church understood something the Puritans understood

about vocation. You're home free. He who began it finishes it. There is nothing left to do. Your vocation has nothing to do with you're going to heaven. The real issue, like Forde says is, "what do you want to do?"

If you can be content sitting around thinking about yourself all the time, be my guest; I still think you're going to heaven. But there is a reason Jesus said we should love one another so our joy would be full. Perfect love casts out fear - the love of Christ shed abroad in your heart - fulfilling the law. You and I need to see it flow out.

How then should we live? Unto our neighbor. Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and all these things shall be added unto you.

As a mother, you have opportunity to teach your children the catechism all the time. You grandmothers are to care for your grandchildren in the same way.

Now that it is all over and there is nothing left to do, how do you want to spend the rest of your life? Thinking about yourself and getting yours? Or loving your neighbor? God is in no hurry. You will reap what you sow. If you sow selfishness, the world is set up so that you will be lonely.

The world would tell you that you're "only" a mother. You have vocations and it is through those vocations that crosses come into your life – the crosses God chooses. His Spirit is guiding you. Any man or woman would say they fall short in love all the time and always need baptism and forgiveness. He is present in the sacraments, and tells us that our sins are forgiven. Those who are forgiven much love much. The gospel is so great they can't shut up about it. Start with the people who are closest to you, right where you are, but don't stop there. What are you equipping your children for? To have a vocation so they would be very excellent in all they do. There is no boasting in it or righteousness, but it is so they can love their neighbor.

Wouldn't it be good to be centered?