

VOCATION

LIFE IN THE REAL WORLD

Vocation – Definition

In the medieval church structure the term vocation had been used in reference to the sacred ministry and various religious orders. Devoting time to “religious things” was seen as being “more holy” (i.e., to be a monk was thought to have more spiritual value than being a maid).

1. Though our Lord Jesus had not addressed the specific situation that Martin Luther encountered, His comments in regard to the practice of public piety relate well to our study on vocation.
2. The religious life, though externally appearing more God-pleasing, disregards the chief of God’s gifts. Read Matthew 6:1 (2-6, 16-18). What is being sought by those who overtly demonstrate their work and what two-fold aspect of life is being neglected?

Martin Luther was the first to use vocation in reference to non-ecclesiastical offices/occupations. True holy living is found in—not apart from—the spirituality of ordinary life (i.e. to be a maid has more value than to be a monk if her work is done in faith).

3. After Constantine, by the end of the fourth century, everyone was supposed to be a Christian by imperial decree and was baptized as an infant; however, because Christianity was the civil religion of the Roman Empire, it also became shallow. No wonder that the same century witnessed the flowering of monasticism, the movement of people who wanted to be serious Christians at a time of lowered standards. Their argument was clear; though Christ gave general exhortations to every Christian, e.g., love God and neighbor, He also gave special counsel to those who wanted more. Read Matthew 19:12, 21. How could one read those verses and narrow their meaning, implying a higher calling?
4. Luther began his thinking with 1 Corinthians 7:20: “Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called”. How might you explain how Luther employed that verse against the belief that one had to leave one’s previous way of life and become a member of a religious order in order to serve God truly?

In common usage today vocation has become virtually synonymous with a “job” or “profession.” However, the word vocation (in its Latinate form *vocatio*) means “calling.”

5. While modern usage seems to have reduced “vocation” to “occupation”, how do the Ten Commandments root vocation in relation rather than the labor or task itself? See also the image of body in Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12.

Stations – *Stand in the place where You are!*

A vocation is a “station” which by its nature is helpful to others if it is followed; a station is “the place where a person or thing stands or is located, especially an assigned post, position, or location” (Webster’s).

1. The English word “calling”, despite its clear secular meaning, has a definitely religious flavor; for if I describe my work as a “calling”, then someone must have “called” me. But who? An inner voice? Perhaps God? Linguists agree that it was Luther who created this meaning of the term through his bold theological move of equalizing the value of all work before God: works have nothing to do with salvation.
2. The Greek word for “(a) call” / “calling” is *klesis*, which appears in Romans 11:29; 1 Corinthians 1:26, 7:20; Ephesians 1:18, 4:1,4; Philippians 3:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 3:1; 2 Peter 1:10. How is “call” / “calling” used in those verses? What possible distinction exists in 1 Corinthians 7:20?

Any given person has a variety of vocations. A typical man might have the following vocations simultaneously: husband (serving his wife), father (serving his children), son (serving his parents), employer (serving his workers), employee (serving his boss), citizen (serving his country), neighbor (serving those nearby), friend (serving those close to him).

How do I know if I have a vocation? Ask the better question: “Who is my neighbor?”

3. How does the relational view of vocation, as expressed in the two previous paragraphs, differ from an occupational view of vocation? Review Romans 12:9-13:10.

The Place of Vocation in the Christian Life - An Overview

Our Lord summarizes the demands of God’s law: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).

1. In the conversation with the scribe of the Scripture (Luke 10:25ff), Jesus states, without explanation that the chief commandment is “You shall love the LORD your God”; yet, at the same time He offers no specific illustration of that love. How does one love the LORD your God?
2. In that same conversation, Jesus challenges the rabbinical understanding of neighbor. He does not offer a legal definition, but He portrays love of the neighbor. How?

We are tempted to think that some vocations are better than others, often because they receive greatly worldly honor and recognition, but all vocations are the same in the sight of God precisely because He, as Creator, desires the salvation of all possible neighbors.

3. The doctrine of vocation cannot be constructed upon a single proverb; how does Proverbs 19:17 begin to exemplify vocation's direction? What about Romans 12:16? And finally John 13:12-17?

The most simple, mundane, earthly work becomes a heavenly vocation when done in faith (1 Samuel 10:7, "Do as the occasion demands, for God is with you").

- A mother nursing her child or changing diapers
 - An elderly husband taking care of his wife with Alzheimer's
 - A young boy taking out the trash on Saturday mornings
 - A wife making sandwiches for lunch
 - A worker stocking the shelves of the local hardware store
 - Offering a thirsty person a cup of cold water in Christ's name (Matthew 25:31-40)
4. The Corinthian congregation was being fractured by individuals selfishly seeking prominent positions within the Body of Christ. In response to the divisions and disharmony, Paul reminded the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12:12-26) first of all that each occupied a _____ in the _____. Rather than exalting one's self over another, he teaches that each position exercise itself in _____ (1 Corinthians 12:31ff).
 5. Review Ephesians 5:22-6:9 (also Colossians 3:18-4:1). Does Paul rank in honor those vocations? What conclusion might we draw?

We tend to define ourselves by what we do (i.e. "What do you want to be when you grow up?", "So, what do you do?" but vocation gives shape to *who we are*. Yet, the Christian life is not about "doing" but about "being." It's not about what you can become, but who you already are (what God has made you to be). Thus, vocation is intrinsically tied to Baptism

- I *am* baptized versus I *was* baptized.
 - The best way to tell what you should do as a Christian is to grow in your understanding of who you are in Christ.
 - We would just like to know what to *do*, but God insists on just telling us who we *are*, namely a baptized child of God.
6. As far as we can determine Luther does not use *Beruf* (German for profession, occupation, vocation) or vocation in reference to the work of a non-Christian. How do we trace that use of vocation to passages such as Exodus 19:5,6; 1 Peter 2:9; Romans 6:11, 14:23 (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:31)?

We do a fairly good job of preparing for one vocation (i.e. job), but we do not do as good a job preparing for the equally important vocations of being parents, spouses and the like. We can use our work as a pretext for neglecting what are perhaps more important offices. Christian vocation is not the end goal of the Christian faith; it is an extension of the Christian faith.

It is not about what I can become, but how can I best be who God has made me to be. The work of every Christian in this world is actually the work Jesus Christ is doing in and through them (Galatians 2:20).

7. In what way does Paul stress the same teaching in Philippians 2:12-16?

Masks of God - “Behold I bring you fresh eggs from God”

Lutheran theology speaks of two kingdoms, that God rules both the spiritual and the earthly realms, though in different ways.

1. Spiritual realm – How do we relate to God? How do we stand before Him in our day to day living and how will we stand before Him on the last day? (Rom. 3:28)
2. Earthly Realm – How do we relate to life in the world? What is its main focus? What time does it exist in? (1 Thessalonians 4:1-12)

God is active: He works through means.

3. What is the main activity of man in the Spiritual Realm (Galatians 3:11-14)? How do we see this so visibly in our Divine worship, in our devotional life, and in our prayers?
4. What is the main activity of man on the Earthly Realm (Genesis 2:15; 17-18, & Leviticus 19:18)? Do these verses tell us anything about how we should view all of our various vocations? Can any of these activities ever transcend the earthly realm and give us extra credit in the heavenly?

Definition of Mask: “A covering of the face or part of the face, to conceal or disguise the identity.” (Webster’s)

We are to work for the good of other people. We receive blessings from others in their vocations, just as they are blessed through us in our vocations. But God is behind it all. We simply serve as His masks.

The casual observer sees business activity or industrial policy (i.e., the outward things); the Christian sees them as masks of God working through them. One who does not have the gospel cannot differentiate between God and His mask. Here is an example from Luther:

“All our work in the field in the garden, in the city, in the home, in struggle, in government – to what does it all amount before God except child’s play, by means of which God is pleased to give His gifts in the field, at home, and everywhere? These are the masks of our Lord God, behind which He wants to be hidden and to do all things.”¹

5. God could create children from the dust, but instead He chooses a husband and wife. Procreation is a divinely delegated responsibility, but not viewed as such by the unbelieving world. How do we understand wife, husband, and every other appropriate station in life as the work of God? Read Genesis 2:24; Isaiah 45:1,4-7; Luke 3:10-14; Romans 13:1-6; Romans 12:17-21.

¹ Luther, *Exposition of Psalm 147*, as quoted by Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, (trans. Carl C. Rasmussen, Minneapolis: Augsburg; reprinted, Evansville, IN: Ballast Press, 1994), 138.

6. Please read Matthew 25:31-46. Who are we really helping in our various vocations and stations of life? How are our various vocations and masks of God described by Jesus? How does our Lord describe confessing Him in our vocations? Read Matthew 10:34-39.
7. Why is the world incapable of seeing God working in creation? Read Romans 3:10-12, 17-18. What opens one's eyes to the mystery of God's plan? Read Ephesians 3:4-6.
8. When will the masks of God finally be removed? Read Revelation 7:15-17; 22:1-5; Matthew 25:31ff.

The Selfish Pursuit of Independence – A False View of Reality

American culture encourages a false ideal of self-sufficiency, suggesting we should not be dependent on anyone for anything at any time. Man's constant mistake is that he thinks he is doing something by himself.² In what ways does the culture around us entice us to live life in that manner?

Yet upon considered reflection of life, we understand that our lives, by their created nature, are woven into the fabric of others. This starts with our dependence on the Triune God and is reflected in our service to others

1. Read 1 John 4:7-19. What does John label as the source of our loving service? How are we connected to the source?
2. Mark 12:28-34 further unfolds loving service; how does the Lord elaborate on service in this conversation? Why are we connected to our neighbors?
3. Dr. Gene Veith states: "In God's design, each person is to love his or her neighbors and to serve them with the gifts appropriate to each vocation. This means that I serve you with my talents, and you serve me with your talents. The result is a divine division of labor in which everyone is constantly giving and receiving in a vast interchange, a unity of diverse people in a social order whose substance and energy is love."³ The unbelieving world will not perceive divisions of vocation in this divine light; what might unbelievers call it? What truth might there be within their description of vocation and (in)dependence? Consider Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Proverbs 11:14, 13:20, 20:20.
4. What is the difference between describing relationships from a purely economic perspective and from the Christian perspective?

The Relationship of Creation and Vocation

In the First Article of the Creed we confess:

I Believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.
What does this mean?

² Wingren, p. 135.

³ Veith, p. 40.

I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still takes care of them. He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

1. To whom does God the Father almighty provide all those things? Why does He provide them? How do Christians receive these as distinguished from the unbeliever? Consider Genesis 1:26-28 & Genesis 9:12-17 (Psalm 19:16; Romans 1:18ff.); Matthew 5:43-48; 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

God Himself is active in everyday life through the provision of daily bread. We pray in the Lord's Prayer "give us this day our daily bread" and He does. Yes, He has provided through uncommon means, e.g., by providing manna for the Israelites in the desert, but normally He provides through common means (i.e. the entire economic system, everything from farmers, bakers, truck drivers, retailers).

- Creation itself is engaged in caring for our daily needs.
- When we pray before/after meals we thank God and not the cook.
- Healing through doctors, nurses, etc. He can do so directly, but in the normal course of life He does through doctors, nurses, etc.
- Teaches through parents and teachers
- Protection through government, police officers, military
- Forgiveness through pastors
- Care of children through offices of husband/wife, mother/father

2. How much of the Christian's life, and the life of every individual, is surrounded by the work of God?

God could populate the whole earth by creating each new generation of babies from the dust. Instead, He ordained that human beings should come together in community to nurture children in families.

In His earthly kingdom, just as in His spiritual kingdom, God bestows His gifts through *means*, namely in relationships and communities existing in a state of interdependence (dependence is our proper human condition). Through these various means (vocations), God providentially cares for his people. Luther:

"He gives the wool, but not without our labor. If it is on the sheep, it makes no garment."

"In his vocation man does works which effect the well-being of others; for so God has made all offices. Through this work in man's offices, God's creative work is

love, a profusion of good gifts. With persons as his “hands” or “coworkers,” God gives His gifts through the earthly vocations, toward man’s life on earth (food through farmers, fisherman and hunters; external peace through princes, judges and orderly powers; knowledge and education through teachers and parents, etc., etc.). Through the preacher’s vocation, God gives the forgiveness of sins. Thus love comes from God, flowing down to human beings on earth through all vocations, through both spiritual and earthly governments.”

God uses the things of his creation to care for His creatures; “Tools and food, needle and thimble – not even excepting ‘your beer-vat’ – call aloud, ‘Use us for the well-being of your neighbor.’”

3. To what kind of life does this relation between creation and vocation call us? Reflect upon Proverbs 12:11,14,27; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-13.

Baptism – A Double Calling

Work is good; man was created by God to work (Genesis 2:15), and man’s work was his calling. Following the fall he still worked, but now his work is received as drudgery (Genesis 3:17,18). Yet God did not throw man’s vocations out with rebellion and disbelief (work was toil, yet daily bread was still provided).

Because vocation is tied to creation, vocation is necessarily part of the life recreated through baptism

1. Through what relationship and chief event were the people of Israel to reflect their new perspective on vocation? Exodus 19:5,6; Exodus 20:1ff.
2. Within what relationship and through what event should we consider our vocations?

Baptized into Christ, we have put on Christ. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17). As it was in the Garden of Eden, so it is with us, newly created by water and the Spirit. The Lord God not only invites us into His fellowship, He invites us into partnership with Him in this world. Every baptized child of God has a double calling: called into the holy Christian church and into a daily calling – a vocation – where he or she labors as a co-worker with God in the care of His creation.

3. Read Acts 9:36. How does the life of Tabitha portray that understanding? What about Paul’s work as a tent-maker? See 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9. How can that reflection alter how we view our daily labors in every circumstance? What meaning does this provide for our daily work?

Divine Service – The Hiddenness of God

The prophet Isaiah—in the midst of national apostasy, political collapse, and divine judgment—concludes: “Truly You are a God who hides Himself” (Isaiah 45:15). To say

God is hidden, of course, does not mean that He is absent. On the contrary, someone who is hidden is, by definition, actually present, just not seen.

God is present through His Means of Grace, though hidden. He serves us in extraordinary ways through quite ordinary means.

The foundation for Christian living is the same as God's response to sin: forgiveness. Thus, as you cannot separate vocation from creation, you cannot separate vocation from the place of recreation, the Divine Service. All life is liturgical living; we worship God (in response to His service to us) by serving our neighbor. Every word and every action of every Christian is carried out *by* the Holy Trinity *for* the Holy Trinity.

God seeks to serve us in the earthly kingdom the way He does in the spiritual kingdom – hidden in humble means. Christ came in the flesh through humble means (a babe born to poor parents and laid in an animal's trough); Christ comes to us today through humble means (simple words, simple water, simple bread and wine); and He still works through us in the world through humble means (in our various vocations).

In the Divine Service we stop working so God can work in us. He serves us; we respond. But how? And to who? The Christian's vocation in the world is to live as a member of the Royal Priesthood of Believers in the particular stations of life God has given him. We receive life and strength for such service in the Divine Service.

“Our Lord gives us His body to eat and His blood to drink. Finally His blessing moves us out into our calling, where His gifts have their fruition.”⁴

He serves us (through hidden means) and then we go and do likewise through service to our neighbor (we become His hidden means to them). Remember the post- communion collect:

“We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another...”

1. What is the priesthood of all believers? Read 1 Peter 2:8 (Exodus 19:5,6). What assures us that our work in this present life, though hidden under the common and ordinary, and even despised by some, has inherent worth? Reflect on 1 Corinthians 15:57,58.
2. The chief gift of the Lord's Supper is the forgiveness of sins; to what does the forgiveness of sins draw us?

II. The Benefit of the Sacrament

What is the benefit of such eating and drinking? That is shown us by these words: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins;" namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given us through these words; for where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

3. To what are we testifying about our daily work when we make time to attend the services of hearing the Word and receiving the Sacrament?

⁴ Introduction, *Lutheran Worship*, 6.

4. To what do we testify when we labor at home and at work then? Consider what we say when we do not respond as the world does (Matthew 5:43-48).

The Vocation of Pastor – *An excursus*

All Christians are called by the Gospel into faith. Though the vocation of pastor is no more meritorious than that of the farmer and factory worker, it is nonetheless of particular importance because through the pastor's preaching, teaching, shepherding, and administering the Sacraments, God Himself is working, bringing sinners to Himself through the work of a human being.

- The pastor is acting "in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ"; in other words, he is a mask of God.
- God baptizes through the hands of a pastor; Christ presides over His Supper, as the pastor distributes; God's Word rings out in the pastor's sermon.
- In the pastoral office (or station), as in all callings, God is hidden.

Laypeople, too, have vocations they exercise within the life of the church (organist, treasurer, administrator, altar care, etc.) These are not properly speaking "ministries" though; they are, however, vocations pleasing in God's sight when carried out in faith.

The faulty notion of "everyone a minister" may confuse some in regard to vocation; for it might hinder people exercising the vocations that God has given them. Luther was particularly vehement when earthly rulers presumed to tell pastors what to preach (i.e., how to carry out their vocation): "You fool," he said, addressing the prince, "you simpleton, look to your own vocation; don't you take to preaching, but let your pastor do that."⁵

It is a false premise that only "religious" professions are "holy vocations."

1. Though each member of the Body of Christ serves in a different capacity – each serves with a different vocation, the aspiration of each member and the entire Body is yet one. To what does our individual and common work aspire? Consider Ephesians 4:11-16.
2. What happens when people step outside of their vocations in the Body of Christ? Consider the rebellion of Numbers 16. How did some step outside of their vocations? Why did the confusion have to be ended?
3. In order to prevent confusion of vocations, we must we teach and remember? Ponder how the Lord explains the commands given to Israel in Leviticus 19.

Stations of the Cross - *Contra the Theology of Glory*

A vocation makes no man holy; entering a particular call makes no person immune to failures and sin, and tests and tribulations from without and within. Though called into holy vocations, we remain sinners: the New Adam always lives in Christ and therefore lives to love others; yet the Old Adam always lives for himself. It is impossible to sort out our personal motivations; because of the world's sin, our own sinful desires,

⁵ *Exposition of John 1 and 2* as quoted in Wingren, 114.

and the power of the devil, living out the faith in our various vocations is a cross—for each day we seek to drown the desire of serving ourselves. The cross cannot be separated from vocation. Experience demonstrates that we often fail, suffer and experience frustration in our vocations.

- In spite of how parents raise their children, children might rebel against parents.
- Problems might arise between Christian spouses.
- A business owner's company might go bankrupt, leading to the layoff of workers.
- A pastor's congregation might turn against him though he is being faithful to God's Word.

1. In what other ways might a vocation cause us to suffer? How does that suffering in vocation draw our eyes away from ourselves?
2. Where would God have us turn when suffering grips our lives in the midst of vocation?

Because God is at work in vocation, the devil always seeks to thwart vocation:

- Temptations to place our own needs and desires above our service to others.
- Temptations to self-aggrandizement, pride in good works, and earthly success.
- Ploys of trying to pry someone out of their vocation by tempting them to quit, get a divorce, quit a job, give up on one's talents and abilities.

3. If suffering were to hinder the exercise of vocation, what would happen within God's creation?

Despite the sinful flesh/selfish motives of those in their own vocations, God yet is able to bring His goodness and kindness into the world:

- The vocation of marriage itself curbs normally selfish adults so that they would sacrifice themselves for the well-being of their children.
- An employer might be selling his product for the sake of no one but himself. Yet, in doing so, besides for providing jobs for others, he is also providing a good or service through which God provides daily bread for people.

Each station in life is accompanied by its own burdens, unique crosses. Even as God fits each member of the Body for its vocation, the burdens of that vocation—its crosses—are not to be chosen by us; they are laid upon us by God for His purposes. Paul's table of duties (e.g., Ephesians 5:22ff) indirectly acknowledges that.

For some, however, the burden of vocation might seem to indicate that "I am in the wrong vocation".

4. Can one truly know if one is in the right vocation? How do you know you are in the right vocation?

Luther responded: “Take it as a sure sign that you are in a right station which is pleasing to God, if you feel disgust and dislike for it. God is certainly at hand. He permits the evil spirit to attack and tempt you, to see whether you are fickle or steadfast, or not; and he provides an opportunity for your faith to fight and grow stronger.”

But what if we feel like running from our vocation? “Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called” (1 Corinthians 7:20). Vocation demands that we sacrifice our wants and desires (i.e. a mother wants to sleep but her baby is crying).

The worldly view of vocation is often conceived as merely a means to getting things and stuff for this life. But our hope is for the next life and we carry out our vocations in view of the life to come, in spite of the crosses we face.

Vocation is earthly, just as shockingly earthly as the humanity of Christ, apparently so void of all divinity. In the crucifixion of Christ the divine nature was only hidden, not absent; it was present in the lowly form of love for robbers and soldiers. Similarly, God conceals His work of love to men in cross-marked vocation, which is really of benefit to the neighbor. In Christ’s victory on the cross, which looks so poor- love’s victory in lowliness- God is hidden; therefore the resurrection takes place on the third day. Now Christ’s victory is proffered through the Gospel to sorely tried man, who in the labors of his vocation undergoes the crucifixion of his old nature. Through faith in the Gospel, I arise as a new man, born of the Church, in hope possessing heave and eternal life beyond bodily death. From the roughness of earthly life there opens up a vista of life and freedom in the coming kingdom, and only one way leads to it – subjection to the cross here.⁶

When God gives a vocation, he also gives his promise to be with him who endures vocation’s cross and cries to God.⁷

5. How might we use our suffering in the midst of vocation as a testimony to whose we are and how we are supported in our vocation?

Cross and Vocation - *An Impetus for Prayer*

1. When daily labor creates challenges and questions of how and why arise, people seek advice and counsel; they need encouragement, guidance, and strength to complete the task. When your vocation must endure suffering, what is your reaction, and how does your faith respond?

Desperation arises in our vocation, and stimulates our prayers and calls to our Father.

2. Consider Nehemiah 1; how did Nehemiah’s situation (though not chiefly his vocation yet) compel him to pray? How did he yearn for the gospel?

⁶ Wingren, 57, 58.

⁷ Wingren, 208.

Thus, vocation, in driving us to prayer, would have us return to the Divine Service, and therefore seek fervently the gifts that enliven our vocation in the first place.

Prayer calls upon the God, Creator and Lord, to enter creatively into home, community, and labor. Man simultaneously directs his effort downward and his faith upward, thus becoming a co-laborer with God and a mask for him.⁸

3. Though Paul's instruction in 1 Timothy 5 is not concerned chiefly with prayer, in what way do we see effort directed downward and faith upward?
4. if vocation is indeed a mask of God, how might we take opportunity to "reveal" the God behind the mask, e.g., as a neighbor or as a parent?

The Purpose of Vocation - *Living Outside Ourselves*

The purpose of every vocation is the self-sacrificial service of others. As Wingren puts it "God does not need our works, but our neighbor does". Strictly speaking, we do not "serve" God; He is always the one serving us. Holiness before God is a gift of the Gospel, already established by Christ. Love towards the neighbor is a requirement of the law (Matthew 23:29 "You shall love your neighbor...").

Rather, we "serve" our neighbor. Thus Luther taught that the Christian always lives outside of himself – in Christ by faith and in the neighbor by love. Through His Divine Service to us and in us, Jesus turns our selfishness inside out.

1. How might that change our understanding of the commandments? They demand that we must no longer be _____ but oriented toward the _____.
2. As a point of review, what does that again teach us about the "purpose" of the Divine Service?

Only before God man stands alone, i.e., as an individual. In the earthly realm man always stands in relation to, and bound to others. Before his neighbor, the Christian is a doer of what God wants done in the world; but before God, the Christian is not a doer but a receiver.

"The sun shines in exactly the same way on all: the peasant and the king, the thorn and the rose, the pig in the alley and the lovely girl. They all receive alike of the sun's light and warmth. But the works and actions which such diverse creatures carry on in the sunlight are widely different, and must be so. Likewise, all people are alike before Christ, who, like the sun, gives himself alike to all. All receive the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper; and all hear the same gospel. As for the reality which makes us Christians there is not the slightest difference between man and woman, young and old, learned and unlearned, great saint and frail character. The differences among persons all lie in the things which they can severely do, a capacity or a work, and these activities are directed 'downward' to the service of others. Before God in heaven there are no

⁸ Wingren, 194.

differences; all are simply human beings and sinners, to whom Christ is given, just like the sun that sheds its light on all without discrimination.”⁹

3. How will our recognition that daily life, in all of its wondrous facets, proceeds from a Father’s hands change how we speak to others about our work, parenthood, citizenship, weather, neighbors, etc.?

Living the Baptismal Life - *Passive in Faith; Active in Love*

Vocation is temporary; it has nothing to do with salvation. Though the declaration of “not guilty” before God has nothing to do with our works, vocation does involve work. Thus, while Christians are passive in faith (faith receives), they are active in love.

A housewife sits quietly in church and listens, whereas at home she is active and does her work (passive in the spiritual realm and active in the earthly). The serf is silent and receptive before his master, but imperative and active toward the livestock...The father is the instrument of procreation, but God is the fountain and author of life.”¹⁰

1. For what is James then calling for in James 2:14-17? And Paul in 1 Timothy 6:17-19?

Again, to quote Wingren: “God does not need our good works, but our neighbor does. It is faith God wants.” Our neighbor needs not faith from us, but love, which is the expression of faith. Remember that Post-Communion Collect of Thanksgiving: “in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another”. Love does not think about doing works, it finds joy in people.

- Love never does something because it must; it acts and keeps no record of its actions.
 - What earthly government would compel us to do, we now do freely. While love works on the earth, in the realm of the law, it is not aware of any law.
 - Love is the inner willingness to do and bear all that is required by vocation, and does it gladly and without resistance.
2. What do Matthew 25:31-40 and Romans 13:8 now add to your understanding of vocation?

Conclusion

In short, our daily routine is anything but routine. For the Christian life is not about “doing” but about “being”; it is not about what we can become, but what God has declared us to be and who we already are in Christ. That is hardly routine.

As God works through humble means to serve us, the vocations He gives to us are humble means through which God serves His creation. The work of every Christian in this world is actually the work our heavenly Father is doing in and through them.

⁹ Wingren, 174.

¹⁰ Wingren, 133,134.

Therefore my identity and the meaning of my life, and the work that flows from them are not about discovering myself and asserting myself, establishing my identity through independence apart from others, but rather about living in trust of the Father by living out our lives in our neighbors' lives.

As Luther wisely noted in the explanations to the commandments, we are not only to hinder evil and chaos entering the lives of our neighbors, we also are to labor and pray for the good of other people. We receive blessings from others in their vocations, and they are blessed through us in our vocations.

And our Father in heaven is behind it all; we, without drawing attention to ourselves, serve as His masks, that others might recognize the good performed and glorify God on the day He visits us. He serves us (through means recognized only by faith) and then we go and do likewise through service to our neighbor (we become His means to them, hidden because they do not yet acknowledge the God behind the works).

1. Several passages may well summarize what have discussed. First, consider Psalm 90:17; how will our vocations perform that which endures?
2. Second, read Luke 17:7-10. When the vocation is ended and the labor has ceased, what should those who have worked confess?
3. And third, if the servant had thus confessed about himself, there yet remains another facet to consider—the servant's master. When the servant says that about himself, who should receive the honor and recognition for the work? Read 1 Peter 2:11,12.

In the end, how do we achieve the best in our various vocations? By receiving in faith and trust the gifts that God seeks to give us. In short, we are returned to the Divine Service, where all life begins.

“Our Lord gives us His body to eat and His blood to drink. Finally His blessing moves us out into our calling, where His gifts have their fruition.”¹¹

Attributed to Rev. Markus Zill

¹¹ Introduction, *Lutheran Worship*, 6.