



...at the intersection of faith and work

Session Six: October 19, 2010

Giving Our Time

new life/hope shared ministry fall 2010 midweek study series

Esther 4:14

[Mordecai said to Esther:] “For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father’s family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.”

Luke 1:37-38

[Gabriel said to Mary:] “For nothing will be impossible with God.” Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

Wisdom on Leaving a Mark

“If your contribution has been vital there will always be somebody to pick up where you left off, and that will be your claim to immortality.”

—Walter Gropius

More Than A Paycheck

We started out this series with the assertion that God calls us as whole human beings and is invested in all the parts of our lives. If that is true, and God is not *only* interested in what we do for forty hours or so each week to earn a living, then we can talk about *vocation* in bigger terms than merely finding a day-job that suits me. Our *vocations*—our *callings*—have to do with where our gifts intersect with the world’s needs, whether or not they happen to be what we are paid for (*this goes back to Buechner’s line about “where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet”*). And that further means that God is not “done” with us at a certain age or after so many years with “the company.” That means that my role as a child, a parent, a spouse, a friend, a congregation member, a mentor, a servant, and surely many other hats are a part of my vocation, along with my “day-job.”

- When you are asked to introduce yourself, how quickly does a paid *job* come up in your self-description? What does that say about how much equate our *selves* with paid *employment*? Is that really a full sense of *vocation*?
- What would you say are the many dimensions of your *calling*? How has that changed over your lifetime? Is only *one* thing your “calling” in life, or is it possible that we are called to many things in our lives? Now here’s the hard question: *how would we know*? In other words, how would I tell the difference between a calling that changes over a lifetime versus just being flaky and fickle?

It’s All God’s...

It’s true with our money, which is a hard enough realization. It’s *all* God’s—not just a tenth, not just whatever makes it into the offering plate, not just a portion. All of our money, our resources, and our abilities are God’s. We may only give a *portion* of that to a local congregation or parachurch organization, but really all of it has come from God and still belongs to God. Well, as the old saying goes, *time is money*. And if that cliché means anything, for us Christians it means that *all* of our time is God’s, too. That not only implies that even our rest and play times are really *God’s*, but also that there is no age or time-period in our lives that is past the point of God’s concern. There is never a point where God says, “I don’t care what you do,” and there is never a point where our days cease to be gifts from God. So, what will we do with our days when we get to a point that we don’t get paid for what we do? And what things in our lives are so worthwhile that we would do them even if we never got a dime or a pat on the back for doing them? How does *that* help us think about our “callings” today?