

## Work

Bible Study Monday 20<sup>th</sup>. April 2020

With all the talk of the “return to work” I thought we might look at one (i.e. mine!) theology of work.

The church has always been muddled about work and part of the blame lies with Jesus.

Read Luke 10.36-42; has Mary really chosen the right part?

But Jesus is consistent; see Matt.6.31-34; Luke 12.22-34.

The problems come when we humans use Jesus to defend our way of life.

Eusebius wrote:-

*“There are two ways of life. The one is above common human living. It admits not marriage, prosperity nor wealth. It is wholly separate from the customary life of man. It devotes itself to the service of God alone in heavenly love. The other life, more humble and more human to many, have children, undertake office, command soldiers, attend to farming trade and other secondary interests”*

And this false Mary/Martha dualism (prayer versus labour) has caused much pain between rich monasteries and poor farmers, and we see Jesus is not always on the side of the monasteries (especially if hypocrisy is involved) see Mark 7.8-13 and Matt 23.1-36;

**First**, I believe all work can devote itself to the service of God alone in heavenly love.

**Second**, I believe all work has three elements, Penitential, Creative, and Eschatological

### **Penitential**

In the beginning work was wonderful a glorious partnership with God. See Gen. 1.26-31 and 2.15 and then something went wrong Gen 3.17-19. Work is now a curse, but we have to keep working until Jesus returns Luke 19.11-27 and 2 Thess. 3.6-15.

So whether it is a slight ‘Monday morning feeling’ or actually putting your life in danger all work has a penitential element.

## **Creative**

Whether you believe we are made in the image of God by virtue of our rationality and brain power; or by virtue of our living in relationship to God and our neighbour; or by virtue of us being the crown of all creation; this image expresses itself in what we actually do. Artists and musicians give us no trouble, we love a beautiful picture or a memorable tune; in other jobs it is more difficult to see creativity. That is because we concentrate on the result or 'output', not on the source or 'input'.

Sometimes we use our talents (an inherited and self developed ability to do something well) and sometimes we use our gifts (a spirit given capability to build up others).

Our creative output at work will depend on us using both our talents and gifts.

Talents: Eph.2.10; Matt.5.14-16; Matt.25.14-30; 1Cor.10.31

Gifts: 1Pet.4.10-11; Ex.31.1-3;

## **Eschatological**

God the Father and God the Son are constantly working together to bring all creation back to themselves. John5.1-23; Col.1.15-20.

And we are always invited to join in! There are probably only two miracles that have no human participation – the creation and the resurrection.

The others need us; a boy John6.1-13; some men John 11.38; some friends Mark2.1-12 and I am sure there are many others.

In conclusion, the dualism of Mary/Martha is alive and well in current society. We gaily talk of some people having a calling – nuns, nurses, teachers, while the rest of us have got a job!

I believe all work is a calling. It may be hard work, (penitential) to produce the goods and services that our neighbours need (creative) but it will help to bring in God's kingdom (eschatological).

So whether you are a nurse or a hedge fund manager, a teacher or a road sweeper you can offer all your work to God.