

Work Vocation & the Gospel

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[0 : 00] Okay, good morning everyone. We have quite a bit of ground to cover so I wanted us to get started quickly. After our journey of the last several weeks on the subject of work, we are starting to begin our descent as we prepare to wrap the series over the next two classes.

But I think it's always helpful, given it's been a while since our last class, to provide a brief recap of the terrain that we've covered. The first couple of classes looked at God's plan for work, how he created us to work, and intended our work to be a continuation of the divine mandate to subdue the earth.

Our work is in some ways a sub-creation under his own completed work of creation at the beginning. We learned that work is good. It comes in a variety of forms, none of which is superior to another.

And it came with constraints meant to continually point us to the one who made us and called us to work. We then spent time looking at a specific section of this, which was work as a vocation. I mean, it's calling from God separate to our occupation and its implication for how we're intended to live. So despite being important, work remains secondary to our primary calling to a relationship with God.

[1 : 20] And we also learned how the inability to earn God's grace nullifies what was in some way the pre-Reformation distinction between spiritual work and regular work, as one was thought to be higher than the other.

Our next set of classes looked at the brokenness of work, which was how the entry of sin into the world alters God's design for work in several ways, making our work fruitless, meaningless, self-centered, and as a medium or channel for our idols, often exposing and amplifying them. Now, today's class pivots to now the gospel and how it impacts and redeems our work. It's the third and final section of the companion book that we have been using for this series.

And while in many ways it returns to some of the ideas we have already covered in the course of the class, the hope is that today this will bring it all, it will develop some of these ideas and integrate them into a coherent framework that allows us to then connect many of the disparate elements that we may have highlighted as we went along.

But before we dive in, let's ask the Lord for his help in prayer. Father Lord, thank you for the good ways in which you have designed our work.

[2 : 37] Despite in many ways the entry of sin into the world threatens to break your good design, we are grateful that through the gospel you are redeeming our work, just as you are doing with our world, and we bring to fulfillment at your return.

We ask that you will open our eyes, our minds, and our hearts to see this redeeming work, even here and now, and for wisdom and grace to join with you in the work, in the ways you call us to. I ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Let me just check that it's recording. Okay, great. Okay, so how does the gospel impact our work? The gospel impacts our work in three main ways that we will look at today.

First, it gives us a new story or new narrative for our work. Next, it gives us a new compass or an assessment rubric for our work. And then finally, it gives us a new motivation or incentive for how and why we work.

So, before we look at the first one on how the gospel gives us a new story and narrative for our work, it may be helpful to understand first why narratives are important in the first place.

[3 : 43] Human beings are meaning makers, and stories are the ways in which we make sense of the world and the ways in which we understand our place in it. Stories are further important because, as Keller quotes the philosopher, I think, Alice Dare McIntyre in his book, he describes

actions as enacted narratives.

I would paraphrase that as saying the things that flow from us in response to the stories that we believe. The closer the stories we tell ourselves match the reality of the world, the better able we can to align ourselves to the world or to the reality of the world and for our decisions and actions to drive results in line with reality.

Conversely, the further away from reality that these stories are, the more likely we are to act in ways that could be at odds with the ends we desire, the poorer our outcomes and our experiences will be.

The bigger the scope of the story that we tell over our lives, the more important that story becomes in shaping outcomes and key decisions we make on the most important questions.

There should note that stories also do not have to be explicitly articulated for them to have sway over our lives. Many of us live under implicit stories that we have assimilated from the culture, from our families, without explicitly questioning.

[5 : 08] And the result of this are actions and beliefs that we express about our work or other things that we assume to be true but are wrong. The final thing is that stories that are at heart contain three basic elements.

Almost every story can be decomposed almost into like that and their variety. There is a situation, a complication and an ultimate resolution. The situation captures the ideal or the context of the world. The complication describes the main problem. The resolution articulates how that problem can be addressed to restore the world to what it was or what it was meant to be. So I was thinking an example would be The Lion King, which was one of my favorite animations by a huge margin actually.

But the story is simply, Simba was born to be king in Pride Rock. Pride Rock is somewhere else. I think it's called Pride Rock. Yeah. Okay, I think it's somewhere else that uses the term Pride Rock. I don't remember. And then Mufasa's brother, Scar, the complication, you know, kills Mufasa. Scar kills Mufasa to assume the throne.

[6 : 23] And then Simba runs away for his life. And then he comes back. You know, the resolution is he comes back. He comes back, he battles Scar and becomes victorious and returns the kingdom to what it was meant to be.

The situation, complication, resolution. You can try that with almost any movie. It will follow the same. Of course, each section in like would then have subsections of each story. But that's the broad, broad frame of how stories are told.

So if we look at the gospel in this way, the gospel as a story we tell, you can summarize it essentially in three main points similarly.

God made the world good, created us humans for a relationship with him and to steward and continue the good work of creation that he had begun. This was the first couple of classes. Sin, the complication, entered the world through our disobedience.

And with it, death, brokenness, and evil came into the world. Sin, as we discover in the development of the plot, is actually not primarily an action, but an orientation and posture of the heart in rebellion to God.

[7 : 29] The resolution is God addresses the problem by sending his son, Jesus, to atone for our sin, justify us freely by grace and not by works. And through his spirit, he sanctifies us, making us more like his son, Jesus, and ultimately with us, redeem and restore the world.

The fullness of that restoration or that resolution will occur when Jesus returns. But in many ways, it has already begun. And like he did, which is how resolutions take us back or connect to the situation, like he did in the garden, he again invites us to participate in that work of redemption that is already ongoing in the world.

That is like a situation, complication, resolution framework for the story of the gospel. Now, some of the implications of that story, I think, should be obvious, given they form essentially the core of the first four classes that I summarized at the beginning.

Work is good. It is broken by sin. And we see or experience that brokenness in many ways. But there are a few more that in this section of the book, Tim Keller starts to highlight that I think are then relevant here.

So this is the first point on the gospel as a story, how it gives us a new story for work. And the first is that the creation for redemption arc in the story forms the basis of what he calls a re-narration or a

restorative, in my own words, I call it a restorative storytelling that we may need to do as we engage our work as Christians.

[9 : 07] So it's like in each work, what is the good? Where is sin broken? How is this being redeemed? Now, we often may think that this is only needed for those who go into fields today that are culturally associated with godlessness and greed.

I had a private equity Instagram influencer in here as well. But there are so many, I think I wouldn't be able to name them all. But a fuller understanding, the story of the gospel, if you realize it's about a posture of heart and not an action, recognize that sin corrupts all work.

But even culturally good and noble occupations like teaching and nursing, all occupations have some of their grand or sub-narratives in tension with the gospel.

And these shape the outcomes people in them are tempted to pursue. I think Keller gives quite a number of examples in there. One of the most poignant ones is around higher education and the philosophies that are combating what is higher education meant to be.

And how there are, even though it is a positive good in many ways, in trying to shape that story of higher education, people have in some way corrupted some of it, not all of it.

[10 : 24] Now, a direct corollary of also this understanding and embracing, yes, of embracing, what did I write here?

I apologize. So a direct corollary of this framework of the re-narration is we can understand and embrace the common grace that is also present in most or all of these occupations.

So even as the narrative of the gospel helps us to see the occupations for what they are in tension, where they are in tension, where the gospel is in tension with the narratives that they also tell, we are reminded that on the flip side, it is not all bad.

Sin corrupts but does not eliminate the good in the world that God has created. And while these narratives have parts in tension, they also contain much that the gospel celebrates, which we can also embrace and celebrate as good.

And together, these two things, these two ideas or components of the idea, help facilitate a proper integration of our faith and work, without us falling into a full withdrawal, thinking we only have to create Christian copies of everything for them to be glorified to God, or a gullible embrace and in some way excusing sin without challenging it.

[11 : 58] I'll pause. I think this is perhaps one of the more abstract ideas. And towards the end, we will come to very practical ways in which all of these help us in our work. But I wanted to pause to see if there are any questions.

Okay. Okay.

Well, I would give two examples. I think I will be in the course of time. I'll just try to give two examples that I wrote down just in case it will be helpful. I think the first was private equity. I'm not sure how many of you are familiar with private equity.

Some of you know what it is, but most of you know about it. It's essentially associated with these, what they call rubber barons, who in the 80s, when the industry came into its own or its public identity, where people who would buy companies by borrowing debt against the assets of these companies, and in some way using that process to extract significant amounts of value from those companies while destroying, and in some cases destroy them.

I was trying to look up some examples. They've done also some good, but that is the perception. Private equity comes in. They borrow money against the company that they're buying, so the company now has debt tied to its assets, and then they try to strip out the value by breaking it apart.

[13 : 13] That's the caricature of private equity. But many people are unaware that most of them. So the way private equity funds are structured is there are people who operate the fund, who are called general partners, and there are limited partners, the people who contribute money to the fund, the fund that buys and owns and runs these companies.

Many of the contributors to these funds are, you would not imagine, the biggest owners of private equity funds are. Who can guess? Huh?

Insurance funds? Well, they are probably big hosts, but it's pension funds. Pension funds are by and large the massive owners. And I have a friend who worked there who, the re-narration in the positive way is, he, when he goes in as a private equity investor in companies, thinks about the grandma who has been putting money aside for her retirement.

And that money rests on the performance that the companies that they are acquired are supposed to deliver. So his goal is to find companies that have a potential to do very well, but may currently be performing not so well because they are under bad management, and figuring out ways to restructure them in order for them to generate better returns, and thus ensure that teacher's retirement fund by the time he or she is done with work.

And so that is a gospel re-narration or rethinking of, even in this supposedly evil enterprise, there is good there.

[14:46] There are people who, it's because of the work that some of them do, they push the management of many firms to become just better operators of their companies and drive better returns for the pension funds that own the bulk of many of these, of the assets in many of these private equity.

So that is one example of re-narration as a way, as the gospel provides a framework for re-narration, even in potentially evil occupations.

And I say potentially evil because, I mean, as we know, right, knowing what we know about sin and its nature, it's not specific occupations that are good or evil. It's oftentimes, it's figuring out the good of evil in them.

On the second example, I want to talk about another animation I love, which would be Frozen. I have a young daughter. I watched Frozen a long time ago, and I think I have watched it more times in the last, I don't know, year than I would care to count.

But this is, again, this is the second part about the ability to embrace common grace in work. When I think about, there are not very many, at least modern, retellings of sibling love, like the story of Frozen.

[16:03] At the end, I am always captivated by just the strength of the narrative of sibling love. And I'm sure many of you have either watched it or do not care to watch it, so I'm not afraid of giving you a spoiler.

But at the very end, right, there is a perfect picture of the gospel at the end of the story that every time I watch it, I am moved to tears that someone giving up their own life and their own purposes for the rescue of another.

And I can see it very clearly in my eyes. I don't think Disney is run by necessarily Christian figures, but they tell stories that have really powerful Christian implications and stories from which you can use in engaging others about the picture of the gospel without necessarily having to refer to only texts or examples that we are familiar with.

That is common grace. Tim Keller gives another example of another famous Vietnamese movie that has an equally poignant resolution as well. And so we, in the spirit of how the gospel is helping us, through this re-narration it tells, we can reclaim the good through the understanding that there is common grace everywhere while still able to critique the things that are evil about it.

So does this help a little bit more on the concept of narratives and the gospel and retelling stories? The examples help. Yeah, I imagine that.

[17:32] They were too long to write, but I figured we still have some time. All right, so I mentioned there were three ways in which the gospel helps us redeem our work. And I think the second way the gospel impacts or redeems our work is by giving us a new compass, orientation, and ethics for our work.

And so we see this more clearly laid out in the instruction Paul gives in Ephesians 6, I think from verse 7, and I'll read. It says, Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.

Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not men.

Because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. The gospel reminds us that we are not our own, but belong not to ourselves, but to him who paid the price. And because we belong to him, we are called to do our work as unto the one to whom we belong.

[18:51] So slaves, or in our world today we would say employees, are not to do shoddy work when no one is looking, or do poor work for people they don't like, because God is the end of the work.

If God is going to see and receive the work, then it doesn't really matter whether someone's physical eye is on it. Imagine if your manager had a camera trained on your desk, on your computer.

We would in some way, many of us would work differently. I'm always reminded about my inclination, not even inclination, but actual, when you are driving past those automatic toll, you would slow down.

Yeah, just, yeah. And it's the effect that naturally, I was going to look up studies on this, but I'm like, I'm sure we all understand the natural inclination of doing better work when others are watching versus when they are not.

And we, in some way, have a different audience, some of us who never stop watching, and that doesn't watch in some way to penalize, but watches us in a way to reward the work.

[20 : 00] In particular, the work that we do when no one is watching, the work that we do as unto God is work that God rewards. You know, it's like, if you compare that to the story of giving money for those others to see it, Jesus told them, those have received their reward.

Their reward at that time was just the acknowledgement of men. But those who give in secret, where only God sees, are rewarded in openness, so without work. When we work, when no one's eyes are on us, and work because we are working unto God, even secular work, which we know now, after many classes, that is no real different from spiritual work, will be rewarded by God for our faithful service as unto Him.

The final way the gospel imparts our work is by giving us a new incentive or motivation. I think in the previous class, we had covered this when we talked about the subject of idols, our desire for recognition, loss for money, power, and ambition.

But there is a subtle way, Tim Keller points this out, where work is corrupted by sin, and where we are liberated by the gospel's power.

And that is a freedom from what he calls the work underneath the work. And it's best to illustrate with an example that he gives. In this movie, Chariots of Fire, there's one of the runners, Harold Abrams, who describes his reason for wanting to run the Olympics this way.

[21 : 30] I pulled this quote online. It says, I'm forever in pursuit, and I don't know what I am chasing. I have 10 lonely seconds to justify my existence.

Essentially, on the track, while he's running, his work was essentially to prove that he deserved to be here and justify his reason for living.

You may think this is dramatic, but there was another example that I think Keller gave about the famous preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones, who was a doctor before becoming a preacher. And he said to some of his medical students and doctors that there are many whom I have had the privilege of meeting whose tombstones might well bear the grim epitaph, born a man and died a doctor.

So consumed by their work, to the detriment of everything else that God had made them to be. The work under the work that these stories are trying to describe is the temptation for many of us, for work to be, like I mentioned in Harold Abrams' case, a way we justify our very existence and define why we matter in this world, and which we are tempted to hold up as some sort of ticket for our salvation.

In many ways, it's just another expression of salvation by works, a path which the Bible already tells us. And as we have gone through the book of Galatians, as a church we see more clearly, it's already cursed.

[22 : 53] No matter how many races are won, are run and won, or patients treated and cured, it's like drinking seawater to quench your thirst.

Work will never be finished or complete and will only lead to despair and frustration. Now, this perspective contrasts with the motivation that is fueled by the gospel of grace that Keller highlights. When he contrasted Harold Abrams with the main character of the movie, Eric Little, who characterized his motivation this way, I believe God made me for a purpose, but he also made me fast.

And when I run, I feel his pleasure. Because we are saved by grace and not by our works, we don't do anything to earn our salvation. It is freely given to us.

Nothing we can do before can earn it. Otherwise, as it says in scripture, it would be a wage and not a gift. It must also mean that nothing we can do after can be required either.

[23 : 58] Otherwise, it would simply be a credit sale. We are set free from the futility of the work underneath the work. By the rest, Jesus promises to all who labor and are heavily leading, and the

rest we enter by faith in him.

As the writer of Hebrews puts it more directly, there remains then a Sabbath rest for the people of God, for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. God rested on the seventh day, even though we know that God is still working. Similarly, entering God's rest does not mean we don't stop working, but we enter a rest from the work underneath the work.

that frees us to then work as unto God. Okay? I want to pause here again, see if there are questions. Yes, Richard.

What do you mean by the work underneath the work? Mm-hmm. It's like a... It's almost a self-justifying.

[25 : 01] I need to perform for me to know that I have value. If I don't do a great job, I don't feel like I have value as a person or as a human being.

So that is a work underneath. The work is not... So I could be doing good work. So that is work underneath the work, because the actual work, whatever it is, being a doctor or being a teacher, actually is accomplishing some purpose.

But the work underneath the work... You're not just doing that work. We are doing the work underneath the work of trying to justify yourself and your existence, beyond even just the work, the actual elements of the work that you're doing.

There's a bigger, like, medical wish you're trying to achieve. Yep. Through your paid labor, but also, you know, volunteer work or church stuff or...

Mm-hmm. Yeah. And like we mentioned in the first story, in the first point around the stories that we tell, this is particularly, I think, relevant here, that often this is not an explicit story that we tell ourselves.

[26 : 19] You grew up in a culture or... Yeah, and this is not even culture at large or culture made small in, like, our families, where you have to do X to be...

In some way, to be something. Yeah. I'm from Nigeria. And yes, it is pretty important. Education, when I was growing up, was the thing.

Like, you needed to be good in school in order to have a good life. That was literally... There were songs about it. I could sing them, but they would be in a different language. You wouldn't understand it. But I know everybody knew the songs.

You knew the songs. And even in my... There were songs about work. I remember one... All of these songs are... I mean, they are... You could...

This is where, then, the second point or the second sub-point on that narrative work is important because you can do the good cultural or gospel critique. There are good things about what they say about work, about diligence, about...

[27 : 20] But there is also some assumption about work as an end, as a way to fulfill something that I think in the second class, Alex, reminded us.

It sounds very spiritual, but our primary calling is to a relationship with God. I don't think it's... If you think our primary calling is to serve God, no, it's to a relationship with God of which He then invites us to serve alongside Him.

If you mix that up, even Christian work can be corrupted by that mixture. But there are those who pursue for which work becomes an end, and then... Yeah, if you find me after the class, I will sing at least one of those songs for you.

Any other questions? All right. So maybe then our final part, I mean, section, maybe this will spark up a few more.

So then what does this mean for our work practically today? It feels, to Susan's earlier point, some of these ideas may be a bit more abstract around how do those... How do the ideas of re-narration, re-narration of working as unto God, as a new audience, and being free from this work underneath the work?

[28 : 38] How does it play out on a Tuesday afternoon in your workplace? Well, first, thankfully, re-narration does not just work on a macro level, but also on a micro level.

Thus, we are able to see this re-narration of the gospel at work, even in the vexing day-to-day occurrences of our jobs, in light of God's greater purposes.

As it says in Romans 8, 28, The gospel assures us that God works in everything for His purpose, and our task is to seek and ask Him to show us this good and for us, in many ways, to re-narrate

whatever experiences we are having in light of this.

So one famous example in Scripture is the story of Joseph, right? Who was sold into slavery by his brothers, framed by Potiphar's wife, and then forgotten in prison.

I mean, if you wrote this story without the end, it was like this guy just went from low to lower and all the way to the lowest point. But at the end of the story, after he had ultimately become prime minister, and when his brothers were afraid that he would then take revenge on them for what they did to him, this is what he had to say in Genesis 49.

[30 : 18] He said, Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.

So Joseph was able to see those events in the grander narrative of God's plan for what he was doing. Re-narration is not wish fulfillment.

He did not deny the facts or the reality of his brothers' actions, and also even the evil that they intended. He said, You meant it for evil. You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good. Thus, because of the gospel, we can be sure of God's good purposes, even in our trials, even when people intentionally have plans to use, you know, like, either in work, usurp our, take our credit or whatever, like, you can't believe that God has a plan, and I think that is, the work is actually us believing it, not the fact that it is true, because it's like, how can God work in that?

But then the cross is a perfect example. People looked at Jesus on the cross, it's like, that cannot be the Messiah, because he is evidently cursed by God. That is how, yeah, but that is the extent to which God is able to redeem even evil, how much less, like, the grand evil, how much less the minor frustrations in our work.

[31 : 41] They had a pretty, I don't know, it's like a, hopefully humorous example, but I always imagine, imagine if you went on a date, and you got stood up, or something, you got stood up at a date, and you're in the, and you're there, and you meet the person at the date that you eventually marry, how upset would you be at the person who stood you up on the date?

Yeah, I think it's the, that is the way, even we have the capacity, it's just that, often in a failure of imagination, we think all God's power is limited to is the specific experience that we are facing, but, yeah, I can imagine on the wedding day, they're supposed to be the man of the man, thanking the person who didn't show up, because, yeah, if they had shown up, then this wouldn't be, this wouldn't happen, and that's, in many ways, kind of how our experiences can, in the light of the gospel, always remind us that God has a greater purpose, it may not be purposes that are fulfilled here in this earth, but they will definitely be fulfilled in heaven.

The second is a liberation, we have to embrace adventure, appropriately, in pursuit of our work, because we are not defined by success or failure.

So now, one of my favorite science fiction books, is Ender's Game. I don't know if any of you have read Ender's Game, but in that book, some kids are taken into an academy to train them to become space fighters against an invading alien army.

Their training was a cumulative one, as they underwent a series of war game simulations, building to a final capstone-like battle that was like the exam. Now, there's a spoiler alert in the next sentence, so if you want to read it, it's a really good book, you can close your ears.

[33 : 25] It turned out, though, that their final capstone battle was the actual battle with the aliens. That was like the plot twist. But because they didn't know, these kids were able to fight and win by taking risks they otherwise might not have.

If they thought it was an actual battle, where winning or losing would have taken on the existential reality of civilization destruction, rather than, for them, it was just an exam.

Okay, so, spoiler over. So it is with us. Salvation by grace means success or failure does not define us. It actually frees us to embrace and do things, because failure doesn't change the grand narrative, doesn't change anything about our relationship with God, as long as we are working in light of what He's called us to do.

So then, what may you be, what are you holding back, or are you afraid to try? Because you're like, afraid of failure. In light of the gospel, success or failure here in this world, it's kind of like an exam. Yeah, it doesn't mean that like, failing an exam hurts, but it's not existential. It's not life or death. And so, we are set free to embrace this work. The flip side, so this is, the example I just gave is the failure side.

[34 : 44] But there's a flip side that it also keeps success from being golden handcuffs as well. And we see that in, I'm not sure, I should explain what the term golden handcuffs are.

I don't know if you understand them, but for large corporations, the executives are often promised massive payouts should the companies be acquired. That's a golden handcuff.

It means that even though they would love to quit, why quit when you could be fired? And then you could leave with like a massive payout. And so some of them, again, it's a handcuff because it's golden.

It's like, wow. But they are often tied longer to the places that they should otherwise leave. So, this is often a result on our own smaller scale of success.

we can sometimes be tied to our successes in ways that are unhealthy. And we see this, I guess, the positive side of this in the story of Jesus in Mark 1.

[35 : 43] And it says, that evening at sundown they brought to him all who were sick and oppressed by demons. And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons.

And he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him. And rising very early in the morning while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place.

And there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him and they found him and said to him, everyone is looking for you. And he said to them, let us go to the next towns that I may preach there also for that is why I came out.

And he went throughout all Galilee preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. There would have been a temptation for some of us to be like, wow, look at this. Revival, crusade, let us just stay here, plant and...

But Jesus was like, ah no, this isn't why I was called. Let us go. He was able to leave his successes and continue on his mission because the audience of one that he served was the most important thing.

[36 : 52] It didn't really matter success or failure in the eyes of others. So, a question for us would then be, where is success also preventing you from embracing the mission God has given you?

Maybe something he's called you, he's sensed like, where is that? Like, ah man, I'm going to abandon all of this. Even fruitfulness. Remember, it wasn't as though Jesus was being paid dollars. It was like, he was healing the sick and people were coming out. Even good things, success in good things can be the enemy of ultimate things. And I think that's what this can challenge us to think about in the context of our work.

Could it be time to make a change in your job even though you're really good at, this is why, it calls for wisdom but at least it's something for us to prove. Then perhaps one final way in which freedom from work underneath the work can help us is how it enables us to serve in humility.

And Jesus is again our example in John chapter 13. It said, Now before the feast of the Passover when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

[38 : 09] And during supper when the devil had already put it in the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going back to God, rose from supper.

He laid aside his outer garments and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with a towel that was wrapped around him.

There's a similar passage I was just reading in Philippians 2 which says, Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others. Having this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

Both of these passages highlight that Jesus' ability to serve in humility was interestingly linked to a full understanding of himself in relationship to God.

I always, every time I read that verse in 3 that says, Jesus, knowing that the Father had given everything to him, that he had come from God and was returning to God, went and washed seven species.

[39 : 28] It's like, many people, he went and he sat at the head of the table and put his feet up and asked his disciples. That is the natural, secular mind, natural conclusion of that sentence.

For Jesus, knowing all this, was able to lay it aside and actually do work that was humble in nature. The gospel frees us in a similar way.

It allows our work to be gracious expressions of creative energies in service of others, like Dorothy Sayers describes as a definition of work. That often stumbling block or sometimes humbling ourselves, we are set free from in light of the gospel.

So, I will stop here. I don't know, I think there's still time for a few questions. So, open it up. Can you share just like a thought and maybe it will spark something?

So, the sub-narration point is interesting and I'm thinking about how that comes about. Like, how do you discover that there's a false narrative happening in your head, right?

[40 : 45] And so, I'm thinking like the Holy Spirit, right, can convict you, the Word of God, obviously, but also community, right? Like sharing, having someone maybe speak into your work and being open and honest, I think is like an interesting outworking of how that might come about.

It's like, just kind of a call to invite others in and be vulnerable with where we're at from, you know, with work. Because I think you could live under a false narrative for a while, right?

Like, so thinking about how to, and maybe you even discover like, I feel convicted about this, but like, help me work through, you know, like help, like someone might be able to speak into it faster or more clearly than, you know, God might use that person, I guess, to like speak true.

So maybe just a comment as I think about the application of those things, especially the, the re-narrative, what did you call it? Re-narration. That's kind of an interesting point.

But yeah, I guess. Yeah, no, thank you. Kim, first. The precursor question that I wrote down is, how is this not just rationalization to do what I want to do?

[42 : 06] How, yeah, because I'm good at that. And how do I know that that's really what it is? I feel like a life has been, are you sure this is what you want to be doing?

And really, really struggling with that. And I can take something that would, would provide, you know, all of the, all of the qualifications of work and good work and turn that into gospel work with no problem whatsoever.

But is that really, is, I think your point is, how do we know we're being truthful with ourselves in coming to those conclusions? Like discerning, discernment, right?

Right. are, I mean, and I could say, oh, but, you know, this is something that's been on my heart.

Well, of course, deceitful, just deceitful and desperately wicked.

So, how do, how do I know what I can trust? Susan? I think one of the beauties of the church, as I've experienced it in my life, is that I have a lot of deceptions, you know, just, even just growing up in any household, there are assumptions that household has had that you just follow along with and you're questioning it.

[43 : 32] But then you meet someone who displays some quality or ability or characteristic, a godly example.

And it, and when the Lord uses it, go, oh, I could do that. And, and then you have a mentor. I mean, then you watch them and you see how they do that.

You see how they put it together. I mean, I just think it's one of the beauties of the church that God has given us. How many people, you're not best friends with them, but, but you recognize God's work in them and you want it.

You want it. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I'm just, it'd be a, I'm part of a, at one of the campus ministry retreats, um, we had Matt Crossman speak, who is one of the founders of Eltona Vineyard Church.

And he's a professor at the Div school, but he teaches a lot at the college. And, um, he was telling us about, like, his early career. And he was in campus ministry himself and, like, living on two dollars and, you know, doing the, quote, unquote, Lord's work.

[44 : 41] But, he was talking about how he was so scared to go into academia, ultimately, because he thought it was, like, inherently more, like, less godly than what he was doing in the moment.

And I will never forget, he said that he lost so many years to the gospel of being mediocre for Jesus. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Oh! But just, like, applying that in this context of, you know, we are called to do our work with excellence unto the Lord.

And also, there's an element of, like, evaluating, or he was just saying, there's an element of all of this where evaluating how God made you in alignment with, you know, the available occupations and, like, you know, he could do the administrative and campus ministry work that he was doing,

but God made his mind to think and wrestle with some of these big questions and to publish and to teach.

And I have a bunch of, like, non-believing friends at the college who have taken his courses which are, you know, under the guise of the course listing or, like, secular, you know, courses but have been challenged to think about the Christian way of living and the gospel.

And so, if he hadn't made that transition of, like, not being mediocre for Jesus, you know, like that, lives wouldn't have been changed in his career.

[46 : 02] I was just reminded of that. Thank you. Alex? I think I'd wrestle with a lot of the same questions that Kim was talking about. like, how do I separate out what's my selfish motivation versus what God is calling me to do?

And I think I have similar experiences with, personal experiences with things that are being shared and there is an element for me also of God's sovereignty in all of this because one of my most pivotal personal experiences is feeling like I was good at something, feeling like I was called to do something, and with the best wisdom that I had in and of myself and in the community that I was in, I pursued a path and God ultimately said, no, that's not, that's not a path and he closed the door and opened the door to something else and so, that, for me personally, relieves a lot of the work underneath the work because I can trust in the work that God is doing in my life and I can faithfully try to use the wisdom that he's given to me and given to the church in my local community but ultimately if I trust that everything he does is for the good of those who love him then I can rest even in my work of discerning where I should be now and where I should be in the future, so.

Yeah. Yeah, I think, thank you Alex, I think, thank you all for sharing that. I think that point maybe to the original question, Sarah, is helpful that as Christians in community God has given us so many things that enable us to, we can even be set free from that anxiety that I am working underneath a false narrative because we sometimes, I guess, because the, the narrative of growing into an adult is becoming independent whereas in Christian a growing is growing dependence on your father and that is a real conflict of, and so we sometimes think like independent adults where Jesus then encourages us to think like kids and I always give an example because I'm like, I have a young kid, I can always imagine if she comes and says, Dad, I have a big question and I don't know what to do.

There is no parent, even those who have, there is no child who has ever complained that they receive less advice than they want from their parents. No child ever has complained about that. So why would it be the same with God?

Like, you would never get less than you need. It says like, whoever lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives, like any parent, generously without finding fault.

[49 : 00] No parent would say like, yeah, don't come and ask me about that. They would be like, oh, let me tell you. And so I think if we think, if we are reminded of that, we are also set free from that anxiety.

I think the fact that he's not just always there to counsel, but that he's also sovereign. I think, think about Joseph. I always think about his last step of being forgotten in prison was pretty important because if he was, if he was remembered, what would he have done if he was set free?

Maybe he would have gone straight back to try to find his way back to Hebrew and set up this grand confrontation with his brothers. Yep, I'm alive. You know, but God had a bigger plan and so he was conveniently forgotten in prison.

That was something he could not have orchestrated but that God had to. So we are, we can also rest in that. And so there is a, like in many things in faith, a combination of some of the things that God encourages us to do, taking advantage of the grace that he's given us, invite others, especially others who are Christians in your own profession because many of you are challenged in different specific ways, in ways that you can refine each other.

But then people in the church who are outside of that profession who may more clearly see the dominant narrative within the profession in ways that you are blind to and then trust in the Lord and the Spirit.

[50 : 17] But I think you can, in some way, almost like in Inception style, start worrying about the work beneath the work beneath the work, which is, oh my God, like where is my, nah, I think the freedom of the gospel is from everything outside of the work.

It's like, we can just give it to God humbly. The Bible tells us God works in us both to will and to do. It's one of the grand promises of the New Testament.

I don't even have, even when my will is struggling, I can ask God to change my will because that's what he does to work in us both to will and to do according to his pleasure.

So, we are set free from all different layers of the work because of the gospel. Thank you. All right, it's five to ten.

I think this is a good place to end. Next week will be our final class. It will be a Q&A.; So, we've done multiple topics. There are bigger questions that are not isolated to one but span many and Alex and I will be filling those questions next week.

[51 : 25] So, come with them and we hope to see you then. Thank you. Thank you. Do you have a minute to help you with that? Yes. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.