

Engaging the World: Vocation, Eschatology, and Shalom

When I left Regent College in Vancouver in 1978 and entered the economic sphere of life, that is, I got a job, the majority of people outside of Regent who were talking about Christianity and Business were those who were updating the long debated “What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?” Jerusalem represented authentic Christian faith and Athens represented the world. It was a time when the majority of the energy in the evangelical community was animated by the counter-culture Jesus movement.

In fact, if I told Christians I was going into business, they were generally disappointed. If I wasn’t going to be a pastor or a missionary, why didn’t I become a professor or a doctor? And if I really wanted to work in an organization, then I should go to work for a non-profit because at least I would not be selling my soul for money. Rarely would I meet people who were publicly identified as Christians in the marketplace. Fast forward 30 years later and that is no longer the case.

Since then, many thoughtful people, particularly two men that I greatly admire, Rob Banks and Paul Stevens, have begun developing a systematic theology regarding work, organizational life, and the purpose of business. Nevertheless, I continue to interact with numerous people who are quite unsure how their faith is to be brought to bear upon personal matters regarding work on such issues as authority, wealth, performance, community, and status, and even the role of business in society: that is to

say, is the creation of wealth a good? Is work in the for-profit realm of life worth investing our lives in? What is Kingdom work?

Underlying these tensions and troubling questions are an inadequate doctrine of vocation and eschatology. How does my life relate to the story of God in this world? This addresses the issue of identity, purpose, and how we are to engage the world. From my vantage point, in the evangelical community in particular, we need to develop a theology of the formation of Christians whose calling it is to be leaders outside of the gathered people of God, that is, in the world. We need a new framework for understanding how we are to engage the world and we need an intentional process of spiritual formation for these leaders so that their understanding and their inner and outer lives are coherent. This is primarily the role of the church and we desperately need pastors who will make this a central part of their ministry.

This talk is my attempt to propose a way forward in these matters. It is clearly not a finished work. It is meant to be a stimulant to others.

Tomorrow, I am going to speak in great detail regarding how I have tried to translate all of this into my life. Typically, when I speak in a setting of business people they really want to skip the theory and the theology to get to the examples. They want something practical. Something they can take home and implement.

The problem with this approach is that it does not provide an underlying theory or theology. It is what I call the “cafeteria approach” to engaging the world. We go down the cafeteria line and pick out items we like. Ultimately, because we lack a deeper framework for thinking about these issues, we gravitate to charismatic figures

and practical examples that lose their relevance when they are lifted from a specific context. They become the equivalent of the latest management fad.

Behind every practical example are a number of ideas that have grown out of theories. As Christians, our theories have to be grounded in theology. Much of the problems regarding why evangelicalism has been ineffective in fully engaging the world is because we have not addressed the deep theories that animate our actions. We are not aware of the cultural current in which we swim every day. We are not aware of the history of ideas that provide the current of our civilization and that give shape to our lives.

So perhaps it is best to think of this talk as the framework for starting a discussion regarding how Christianity can inform, infuse, and reform the specific work of business. Tomorrow I will speak about how I have tried to apply this framework.

My understanding of how the Christian faith engages the economic sphere of life is shaped by a theology of vocation and eschatology. The theme that is woven through this theology is the biblical concept of shalom. In this talk, I am going to outline how this theology creates the framework for a distinctive understanding of Christian leadership and how that applies to how we are to live in the world, specifically in the economic realm. My focus is going to be on describing the particulars of Christian leadership as opposed to universal principles of leadership. What does Christian leadership look like in a pluralistic world in a secular setting?

I want to suggest that genuine Christian leadership is concerned with enhancing the flourishing of all life, with engaging the world in a manner that brings life and restores joy to all creation.

Clearly, how we understand the future of the world, the final destiny of the Christian life, and how that future impacts our life now, has profound implications for how we invest our time in the world. Said differently, healthy people and cultures are shaped by their past but their understanding of the future gives definition to their present. We cannot go forward looking in the rearview mirror. Where we have come from gives direction to our lives but where we are going gives definition to them.

The long and complicated story regarding how much of evangelicalism developed “life-boat eschatology” is not worth repeating. Unfortunately, it continues to have a very strong pull on many evangelical Christians. At its most radical level, the dualism that infects its theology of creation and redemption becomes most visible when it embraces the future annihilation of the world, with our disembodied immortal souls floating around in heaven for eternity. From popular culture from another generation, we could call it the “Beam me up, Scottie” mentality.

The full biblical vision of the future is completely congruent with the goodness of creation and the material nature of redemption, the resurrection of the body. If we begin with the wonderful picture of the future found in the book of Isaiah and culminating in the Revelation, we find the future hope of God’s people is eternal life on the glorious, restored New Earth. The vision of shalom will be realized on this restored New Earth. On this new Earth, life will be fully flourishing as it was originally meant to

be, and the best and most noble works of all human culture will be brought up into the holy Jerusalem. And lastly, the good works of the people of God that have contributed to this New Earth will follow them into eternity.

The concept of shalom offers the content for the promise of the coming of the Kingdom of God on Earth. The vision of shalom which is a future to be hoped for and a present reality to be striven for, is the defining framework for the prophets of the Old Testament. Shalom represents the way life was meant to be. It finds its culmination in Revelation 21 where the New Heaven descends to the New Earth and God dwells with His people and the Lamb of God is the lamp that will light up the whole world.

Shalom represents the world as it was meant to be. It is the content of the Kingdom of God. It provides the conditions necessary for all of creation to flourish. When shalom is present, truth, beauty, justice, plenty, and the good flourish and bring life. These dimensions of creation will only fully flourish at the end of time, at the full restoration of all things, at the coming of the city of God to the New Earth. Our calling is to live in the light of this alternative vision of the future rather than submitting to the dominant ideologies of the present.

Our calling in this world is to pursue shalom in every aspect of life and this means to pursue truth, beauty, justice, plenty, and the good for all creation. Whenever these break out in this world, they are a reflection of the reign of God; they point to Him. They are the first-fruits of His kingdom and they represent that which will be brought up into the New Earth.

The question for us as Christians is how to live in this fallen world in light of the fact that truth, beauty, justice, plenty, and the good do not reign in creation.

How do we live faithfully in response to these words of scripture.----

“Come follow me....You do not belong to the world...I am sending you into the world...Do not be conformed to the world...Be conformed to me.. For He so loved the world...

Prior to going to Regent, I spent part of the summer of 1977 at L’Abri, Switzerland, the community where Francis Schaeffer created an extraordinary environment to explore issues of faith. I was wrestling with what a radical Christian life looked like. What did it mean to live a holy and pure life for Christ? The leaders at L’Abri were kind and gentle with me as they allowed me to think through the impossibility of being untainted by the world. The moment I put on clothes, brushed my teeth, or ate food, I was fully enmeshed in the fallen systems of the world. Once I grasped that we all live by grace when we enter the world and that we cannot escape the currents of our culture, I understood that a separatist mentality was not the way to love the world, because in reality I could never really separate from the world anyway.

So if I could not separate from the world to avoid the fallen nature of the world, how was I to engage the world?

Learning how to do this brings me to the heart of what I want to speak about today and this is vocation and the development of Christians who are called to offer leadership in the world. Much of the literature regarding leadership does not grow out of a biblical theology. We need an explicit theology of the formation of Christian

leaders and this begins with a theology of vocation that is grounded in creation, redemption, and eschatology and is defined by its Trinitarian framework.

A fully integrative theology of vocation addresses who calls us, what we are called to become, and what we are called to do. Said slightly differently, the biblical doctrine of vocation is an invitation that, if answered, addresses the questions of to whom we belong, what the character of our life is to look like, and what actions we are to take in this world. This comprehensive Trinitarian doctrine can be summarized by orientation, incarnation, and transformation.

This summary can be clearly seen in Peter's letter to the "resident aliens" and "sojourners" who are the people of God.

In 1 Peter, Peter writes that we have a three-fold call in Christ:

1. We are called out of darkness into his marvelous light (2 Peter 2:9). The Call of Christ radically re-orientes our lives.
2. We are called to follow the example of Christ "to follow in his steps." (2 Peter 2:21). The call of Christ means we are to become like him.
3. We are called to bless...to do good...to seek peace. (2 Peter 3:9-11). The call of Christ means we are to bring the hope of his goodness to the world.

This three-fold call frames the Christian life: It is the call to orientation, incarnation, and transformation and each of these requires a response from us.

Orientation means that we are reoriented from darkness to light and that requires us to "exercise faith." Faith is active and is lived out not just as an intellectual assent. At its deepest existential dimension, it is the great line of demarcation. Does the

Triune God exist, and if so, what does that mean for my life now and forever? This is the question we must answer and live out every day of our lives.

Incarnation means that what we do what Jesus wants his way and his way is to “live love.” No person who has walked on this earth has had a greater love for the world than Jesus Christ. No person who has walked on this earth resisted the ways of the world more than Jesus Christ. The extent to which we live love is the extent to which we mirror Jesus. We are to follow in his steps, to “live love.”

Transformation means that because Christ lives within us, into every situation we “bring hope,” the hope of shalom, the hope of the redemptive power of the coming of the kingdom of God, of the renewal of the world. We are to be people who do good, who seek peace, who restore the broken walls, who repair the streets and neighborhoods, and renew the cities. We are to be incarnated hope or what Peter calls “a living hope.” It is the hope that the whole of created reality will be renewed by God, glorified by his presence, and taken into union with his own eternal life.

Our response of exercising faith, living love, and bringing hope is what gives definition to Christian leadership. It is Trinitarian and is profoundly different from the values-based or principle-based leadership models that many Christians gravitate toward. It is only made possible, to use Paul’s language, because we have been “transferred from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his beloved son”(Col. 1). It is particularly Christian, but universally directed. It exists for the benefit of the whole world.

In Luke’s account of the temptations, we see a clear picture of what it means to exercise faith. Because Jesus lived the life we should have lived we can see in his response what it means to exercise faith in light of the temptations of the kingdom of darkness.

In the first temptation, Jesus resisted the initial temptation to which Adam and Israel succumbed. Satan’s challenge to a hungry Jesus was for Jesus to become his own god, to create life for himself by turning stones to bread. Jesus’ response was that his Father was the source of all life. “Not by bread but by the word of God do we live.” Our heavenly Father is the source of all life, the source of all that is good.

The second temptation to rule over all kingdoms is profoundly interesting. Jesus, whose imagination was unencumbered by sin, would have imagined what a good and just and righteous ruler could have done. If he had exercised his will, he could have been the world’s greatest king. By saying no to Satan, he was saying yes to God’s agenda for his life, which meant he had to give us his agenda for his life. That is why you read throughout the gospels this continued reference to “not my will but your will be done.”

The third temptation addresses the question: To whom can we entrust our lives? Is God an instrument of our will or is he the one to whom we entrust everything? Jesus answered this finally on the cross when he said “Into your hands I commit my spirit.”

Acknowledging God as the source of all life, giving up our agenda for life, and entrusting ourselves to him. This is the foundational rhythm to exercising faith and it is

a daily pattern of life that must be deeply imprinted on our day. These three dimensions of exercising faith are organically connected and we never graduate from them. If Satan attacked Jesus at this point, we should be certain that we will be tempted in these same areas.

This starting point to life is profoundly important for those who exercise the authority intrinsic to leadership positions. Our culture has taught us to look to aspects of this world as the source of ultimate good-wealth, beauty, intelligence, power, to pursue our agenda and ambition with a near absolute resolve, and to trust only in ourselves. To exercise faith is a radical reorienting of our lives. It requires a resolute resistance to the current of this world in which we swim. The desire and the capacity to resist this is both a gift of grace and a discipline on our part.

Francis Schaeffer used to lament that many Christians actually lived as “practical atheists.” We believe in Jesus Christ in the abstract but we don’t really trust him in the concrete realities of our daily lives. We reduce our faith to a time we exercised faith as opposed to an ongoing exercising of faith. The gospels and the book of Acts are stories of the apostles learning to actually exercise faith as the central part of their daily lives. Whether it was Peter walking on water, or Paul stating in the midst of a violent storm “So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.” (Acts 27:25).

In my own life, if I do not orient myself each day with these three affirmations: “You are the source of all life, Not my will but your will be done, and I entrust myself to you,” then I find that “living love” and “bringing hope” slip beyond my grasp. We

cannot live the love of Christ or bring the hope of Christ when we are not connected through this daily radical re-orienting, this exercising of faith in Christ in daily life. This feeding on the grace of Christ gives us the capacity to live love and to bring hope to this world.

This is the foundational rhythm of the Christian life. We never graduate out of this rhythm of life. It is not just a beginning step in Christian formation. Incarnation-living love, and transformation-bringing hope, flow from orientation-exercising faith. They are grounded in our participation in the grace of Christ. They are not virtues or values we aspire to attain. They are movements of grace that are learned in the discipline of community.

Exercising faith, living love, and bringing hope are organically connected. Exercising faith is like the roots of the tree. Just as the roots of the tree are not visible like the trunk and the fruit of the tree, exercising faith often is not seen in the same way that living love and bringing hope are. But just as the roots provide the nourishment to sustain the tree, the active, daily exercising of faith is the foundation of Christian leadership. At the foundation of exercising faith is our prayer life. John Calvin once wrote that there is no such thing as a “prayerless Christian.” The depth of our prayer life is a barometer for how we are living with a different orientation.

Incarnation, embodying the reality of Jesus, means to follow in his steps, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “Be imitators of God, therefore, ...and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to

God (Eph 5:1). Because ‘Christ is in you’ not only has Jesus left us an example, but through the Holy Spirit we have become his body on earth.

Living love for Christian leaders is defined by the life of Jesus, who came to serve, not to be served, who bore our burdens, and who created community. Said differently, to live love as a leader means to be a minister,-He came to serve, a priest-He bore our burdens, and a pastor-He created community. Minister, priest, pastor- these are the three dimensions of living love that are to frame what “living love” means for Christian leaders. These are the character attributes of Christian leaders.

A minister is one who serves and the way that leaders serve is by equipping followers, by enabling their gifts to flourish. Equipping others is the appropriate use of power by leaders because it directs the purpose of the use of power to the enabling of the other to flourish in service to the community. Power used in this manner is an expression of a profound love and an appreciation for the unique giftedness of all people. It is not power over but power in service to the other. Power used in this manner releases the gifts of others.

To minister to another means to take on the responsibility for the flourishing of this person by encouraging the exercising of their gifts for the common good. This means Christian leaders must have a deep knowledge of the people with whom they work, what their gifts are, and they must help each person understand how important their gifts are for the entire organization. We do so because we see the image of God in each person and our desire is to see that image flourish. Because the beauty of God is revealed in people made in His image, when the gifts of a person are being used in a

manner that brings life and enables the creation to flourish, His reign is breaking into this world Said differently, Christian leaders will be committed to the importance of every person in the organization and to all of the work done. For Christians, “there are no little people (Schaeffer) and there is no ordinary work (Lewis).”

To be a minister, serving others by equipping them, means having the wisdom to recognize gifts and then energizing others to use these gifts in service to the community, not just to self. In my life, this has meant structuring our company to take seriously people’s gifts and to recognize the makeup of the gifts on teams. When we structure around people’s gifts, then if I am in a position of authority, the most important thing I can do is to match people’s gifts to the tasks of the organization. This gift recognition and development of the person for the good of the community not just for the self-fulfillment of the person, represents life-giving service to another. I have found that when we are invested in the people around us in this manner, the diversity of the gifts open up in incredibly surprising ways. People’s gifts for service extend behind the boundaries of their daily responsibilities. When they feel equipped, it is amazing how they will reach to perform at new levels.

A priest bears the burdens of people by absorbing those burdens and bringing them before God and bringing God’s blessing to the people. Paul made it clear that to fulfill the law of Christ meant to bear each other’s burdens. Both John and Peter call us a “Kingdom of Priests.” As Christian leaders, we must lean into the burdens of the people in our organizations. This means that we must genuinely know the people with

whom we work. For Christian leaders, who a person is and what they do are fully integrated. People cannot be reduced to instruments of production.

Christian leadership requires that prayer be fully integrated into the life of work. The whole world groans with the burden of the fall and it is our calling to participate in the healing of this world. In prayer, we can lift the burdens of others before God and we can bring God's refreshing touch to the world. I believe we are called to pray for the people with whom we interact everyday, for His inbreaking into our day, that our organization would be a blessing, that it would do good, that it would be a positive force for shalom, and for God's blessing, which is the source of all abundance in this world. Prayer is central to the calling of leadership.

A pastor builds community by inviting everyone to use their gifts for the common good of all or to use Paul's language, enabling us to see "ourselves as members one of another." Building community-or a common-unity- requires leaders to create three conditions in organizations: a clear purpose worth believing in, a deep sense of how each person contributes to this purpose, and a profound experience of belonging. Without a purpose worth believing in, the organization will be filled with cynicism. When people do not believe their work is important, apathy will begin to reign. And when there is not a real sense of connection in the workplace, anger and alienation become a dominant part of the culture. In practice, this means being intentional about connecting people in the workplace by formal and informal means. Whether it is task forces or softball teams, recognition events or birthday parties, process innovation programs or baby showers, we want the place of work to be a life-affirming, human

connecting experience. This means we must create a culture of second chances, always valuing the person above performance, but also challenging each person to use their gifts to enable the other members to prosper as well.

In the book of Proverbs, the righteous are those who serve the needs of the community, who are willing to disadvantage themselves for the advantage of the community. The way of wicked leaders is to advantage themselves to the disadvantage of the community. Ezekiel describes the judgment God brings to leaders who do this- “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves. Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost.” (Ezekiel 34).

To live love as a leader in the workplace is a radical commitment. It means moving from the Christian faith being defined by a moral code to one defined by the reality of Christ. This incarnational life of love is defined by grace and truth. It does not boast, it does not envy. It is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking. It is not easily angered. It does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. This is the way of Jesus and it is the only way for followers of Jesus to live like him.

Christian leaders, when they live love, when they live as ministers-serving by equipping, priests-bearing burdens, and pastors-building community, will be according

to Peter (2 Peter 1:7,8) effective, productive, and fruitful as light posts for the Kingdom of God.

A man I greatly admire once told me when I was in my early 30's that "leadership was a serious meddling in the life of another." I am not sure I fully understood what he meant at the time. I have a better understanding now. Living love-being a minister, a priest, and a pastor means engaging in a life-giving way in the lives of the people whom we lead everyday.

"Bringing hope," the third element of our vocation in Christ, is transformational in a fallen world. It is the missional life to which we are all called. It is what it means for us to recapture our original destiny as God's vice-regents on earth.

As Peter wrote, to bless, to do good, to seek peace means that as God's people now, we are to strive to realize the shalom of God, the flourishing of life as it was meant to be and as it will be one day on the glorious, restored New Earth. The realization of shalom is the very coming of the reign of God on earth.

Just as the capacity to live love grows organically out of the grace and discipline of exercising faith, our capacity to bring hope grows organically out of the grace and discipline of living love. The transformational effect of bringing hope into every situation is only possible when we come as the "faithful presence" of the One who did not count "equality with God something to be grasped but emptied himself and took the very nature of a servant." If we have not tasted the grace of his love and lived the discipline of giving love, then our efforts to bring hope will be either triumphalistic or egocentric. They will not bring forth the aroma of Christ. Instead, our efforts will be

rooted in a “will to power” which is antithetical to the gospel. When we bring hope, we are Christ’s ambassadors, not just to herald his reign, but also striving to more fully realize it. We are also his prophets, called to articulate a vision of what the inbreaking of his reign could look like now. Learning to put words to what this looks like in a pluralistic, secular setting is what I have spent a great deal of my life trying to do.

For those of us who have been called to walk in the way of Jesus as leaders in the economic sphere of life, I want to conclude with how I understand this calling by addressing the question: how do we live transformationally, bringing hope?

I want to suggest that there are three primary ways to engage the world, to be “in the world” but not “of the world”: Positive affirmation, neutral accommodation, and humble resistance.

First, let me begin with neutral accommodation. In light of common grace, there are numerous penultimate activities that involve the processes of life. They do not call for resistance or transformation. They are not points of conflict. They represent the ordinary details of life: standing in lines, sitting at stoplights, walking the dog, saying good morning, taking out the garbage. These are the callings of the cultivation of life and all of humanity participates in them. They are part of the created order. They call for gracefulness on our part.

Secondly, positive affirmation. We are sent out into the world as heralds to affirm the inbreaking of the Kingdom of God. Whenever we find beauty, good, truth, justice, and plenty, we need to celebrate and give thanks for these gifts. For this flourishing of life is also a resistance to the forces of sin and death and is therefore a

work of the Holy Spirit, the giver of all life. But we are also called to be agents for the Kingdom of God, which means we need to work to see these realized, we need to develop them in our culture, we need to invest in their sustenance, we need to encourage their growth.

How do we invest in them? Think of each of these dimensions with equivalent terms from our culture: Beauty represents aesthetic capital. Truth represents intellectual capital. Justice represents political capital. Good represents social capital. Plenty represents economic capital.

Aesthetic capital, intellectual capital, political capital, social capital, and economic capital must all be reinvested in if a culture is going to flourish. Each of these capitals is systemically related to the other. They are interdependent. For instance, economic capital will not grow without social capital. Trust is required for transactions to take place.

To follow God's admonition to the exiles in Babylon in Jeremiah, we are to "seek the shalom of the cities"(Jer 29:7) in which we live. When we invest in this capital we are seeking shalom, which is the content of the kingdom of God. Wherever we find beauty, truth, justice, plenty, and the good opening up the flourishing of life we need to be affirming these as God's gracious hand bringing forth shalom in the world.

We need to do more than celebrate the flourishing of life, we need to be agents working for shalom.

Thirdly, we offer humble resistance when we find our culture trampling on or perverting the good, truth, beauty, justice, and plenty. When we substitute any of these

biblical categories with idols of this world, we are to resist this change. When beauty is reduced to instrumentalism, when abundance is perverted and turned into materialism, when the therapeutic replaces justice, when nihilism replaces the good, and when truth is reduced to cultural relativity, Christians are called to resist this with the humble and faithful presence of Him who took on the identity of a servant. Our resistance must not reflect the way the world resists and our means for resistance must not use the instruments of the world. We are to be the very body of Christ in this world. We lose our authentic witness to the reality of Christ when we take up the ways of world to secure the end we for which we hope.

Earlier I spoke of shalom as the content of the Kingdom of God and the flourishing of truth, good, beauty, justice, and plenty as the conditions of shalom. The economic sphere of life engages the realm of plenty. The fundamental calling of business flows from the abundance of creation and our responsibility to cultivate creation. As Christians, we do not accept as a starting point a theology of scarcity. The promises of God are to be gracious and to care for creation. The fall has scarred this creation but it has not destroyed it. In Christ, it is to be redeemed.

The purpose of business is to enhance the flourishing of life and when it fulfills this purpose, it creates value for society. The consequences of this value is what we call profit. Economic profit, when the return on capital exceeds the direct and opportunity cost of the capital, is the foundation for financial wealth in society. The Biblical concept of wealth is rooted not just in economic terms but in a covenantal and community context. In the book of Proverbs, the righteous are those who serve the needs of the

community. The wicked are those who only serve themselves. The wealth of the righteous creates life for the entire community. The wealth of the wicked destroys the trust of the community. Several years ago, Bruce Waltke, one of my professors at Regent College encouraged me to study wealth in Proverbs and this is my paraphrase summary:

Those who serve the needs of the community create true wealth,

Poverty comes to those who serve themselves.

The destroyer of trust earns money by deceptive practices,

Those who serve the needs of the community will be rewarded.

Those who gain wealth by taking advantage of another deserve condemnation,

Wealth gained at the expense of another destroys all those involved.

The income of those who serve the needs of the community renews their life,

The income earned by those who destroy trust ultimately destroys everyone.

Wealth that is derived from destroying trust is of no value to the community,

But those who give of themselves in service to the community bring life to everyone.

The calling to provide goods and services that enhance the flourishing of life and that create biblical wealth is godly work. That is, it reflects the work of our Lord and is pleasing to Him. Economic wealth is redeemed and infused with shalom when it comes from serving the needs of another. Its animating spirit is to create value by building trust. It is covenantal and grounded in community. It requires sacrifice and

service. Its animating spirit is not warfare against another. It does not include deception or manipulation.

The creation of biblical wealth is a necessary component of human flourishing. Saying this is not the same things as saying “three cheers for capitalism.” Capitalism must be examined, critiqued, and resisted in light of the biblical view of wealth. It is the calling of Christians in the economic sphere to create true wealth and in doing so, to help redeem culture, a world that was meant to be. The creation of true wealth, because it is grounded in covenant and community, framed by justice, committed to the wellbeing of all, and derived from the stewardship of the gifts of God in creation, is a biblical calling that gives glory to God.

As individuals, we have to struggle with wealth in our lives because the good of wealth can easily become an idol, a false love of the heart. St. Augustine wrote of the distinction of inappropriately enjoying something that is a means to an end for its own sake and appropriately using something as a means to an end for obtaining that which ought to be loved. When we turn means into ends we worship idols. When wealth becomes an end in itself it becomes an idol. When we turn ends into means we become god. When God exists as instrument for us to fulfill our desires, we have completely perverted reality.

In the final analysis, we become what we love. If I enjoy wealth and the power to acquire it for its own sake, then my love is distorted because I am directed to the wrong end. To use St. Augustine’s language, I have desired the wrong thing. I have made a penultimate concern an ultimate concern. I have made that which was meant to

be good into God. My desires have become disordered. For Augustine, disordered love was at the heart of sin. However, if I assign the proper place to wealth as a means to enjoy and to share the enjoyment of God's blessings, my love is rightly directed. The less I love wealth for its own sake, the more I am free to properly use it

C.S. Lewis referred to it as the universal law of confusing "first things" and "second things": Every preference of a small good to a great good, or a partial good to a total good, involves the loss of the small or partial good for which the sacrifice was made. You can't get second things by putting them first; you can get second things only by putting first things first.

Wealth is never a first thing. It is always a second thing. When wealth becomes a first thing, it becomes an idol and moves from creating plenty to plundering lives. Wealth is created by creating value in this world. Wealth to a company or a person is like blood to the human body. No normal person gets up in the morning and says "I live for my blood". However, there is no person who can live without blood. The creation of wealth is a necessary condition for culture and people to flourish but it is not the reason for existence for either a healthy person or a company.

In the end, wealth that is derived from idolatry is destructive because it disorders love and genuine purpose. The purpose of wealth in creation is to enable life to flourish by meeting the material needs of life and by enriching the good, truth, beauty, and justice. When wealth is created that destroys these dimensions it has become a destructive idol. When wealth enhances these dimensions, it is fulfilling its calling to help realize shalom, which is the inbreaking of the rule of God on earth.

When Christian leaders, who give expression to their faith in the economic realm of life create true wealth, by exercising faith, living love, and bringing hope, they can, “says the Holy Spirit,” look forward to the day when they will “rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them” (Rev 14:13) into the New Earth.

Orientation-To exercise faith, Incarnation-to live love, Transformation-to bring hope: These encompass the vocation of Christian leadership. They are all movements of grace that can only be realized through a “learned obedience” in the context of community. This movement of grace takes place over time. It grows organically with each movement building on another. If we return to our tree metaphor, exercising faith are the roots of the tree, living love is the trunk of the tree, and bringing hope is the fruit of the tree. When our calling is fully integrated, when the root structure is deep, when the trunk is strong, and the fruit is sweet and plentiful, we began to reflect to the world a different kind of leader, one who has been conformed to the likeness of His Son.

Developing a theology of vocation and eschatology that gives direction to how to engage the world and that provides a theological framework for the formation of Christian leaders will provide fresh, new energy to evangelicalism. As I have outlined it in this model of Christian leadership, it means forging a new paradigm that brings together the Reformed commitment to the renewal of all of life, the Wesleyan commitment to personal holiness, and the Catholic commitment to the common good.

The church must be the place that equips the people of God to reintegrate thinking-being-doing as disciples of Jesus Christ in every sphere of life. To bring forth

a generation of leaders like this will require pastors who are trained and committed to this kind of spiritual and intellectual formation. It will also require Christian scholars to develop models for the relationship of Christian faith to different aspects of life in a pluralistic culture.

This is a task of Augustinian proportions, but by the grace of God, this kind of intentional and purposeful commitment will create a generation of leaders who understand what it means to exercise faith, live love, and bring hope to the world, a world that is so loved by our Triune God that he bore whatever price was necessary to secure its redemption.
