

Topic Overview

It is all too easy to keep parts of our working lives in separate compartments and to imagine the God is mainly interested in certain things we do. The Church sometimes reinforces this point of view by suggesting that some work is more spiritual. Moreover is there anything distinctive about a Christian at work? This unit explores these issues and imagines how God might be involved in what we do each day.

Question

How might you be able to tell that someone at work was a Christian?

Discussion

How might you group these ideas into common themes?

Perspective

Is there anything that is really distinctive about the Christian at work?

It has been suggested that there are a set of propensities to act which can be associated with Christians at work. What would you like to add to this list?

1. Challenging money as the only way to measure and recognising human cost
2. Speaking up – doing so when it is particularly detrimental or costly to self or business
3. Being a sign of encouragement and giving hope to others
4. Behaving in a self-sacrificial way with a sense of greater good
5. Being held accountable for how we living up to our values
6. Challenging at a systemic level and acting within the given mess

Perspective

Whom does God work through?

“Christians easily take a proprietary view of the Spirit as though it belonged only to them. When they are told that God’s Spirit is poured out not just on a chosen few but on all flesh, they experience an identity problem. If people, who do not acknowledge God or Jesus Christ, are working for the kingdom’s ideals of justice, peace and human solidarity, what is the place of the church? God as spirit is everywhere present creating and sustaining all things and all people. His love is constantly seeking a response, but each one is free to respond or be deaf to this call, and not all people respond. Many who do respond serve God’s kingdom without knowing who it is they serve. The church consists of those who acknowledge that God is who he has shown himself to be in Jesus Christ.”

*‘What Kind of God?: Reflections on Working with People and Churches in North East England’
by Margaret Kane (SCM Press, 1986)*

What is the Church's view about work?



Here is an Industrial Chaplain talking to a working fireman who regularly attends church.

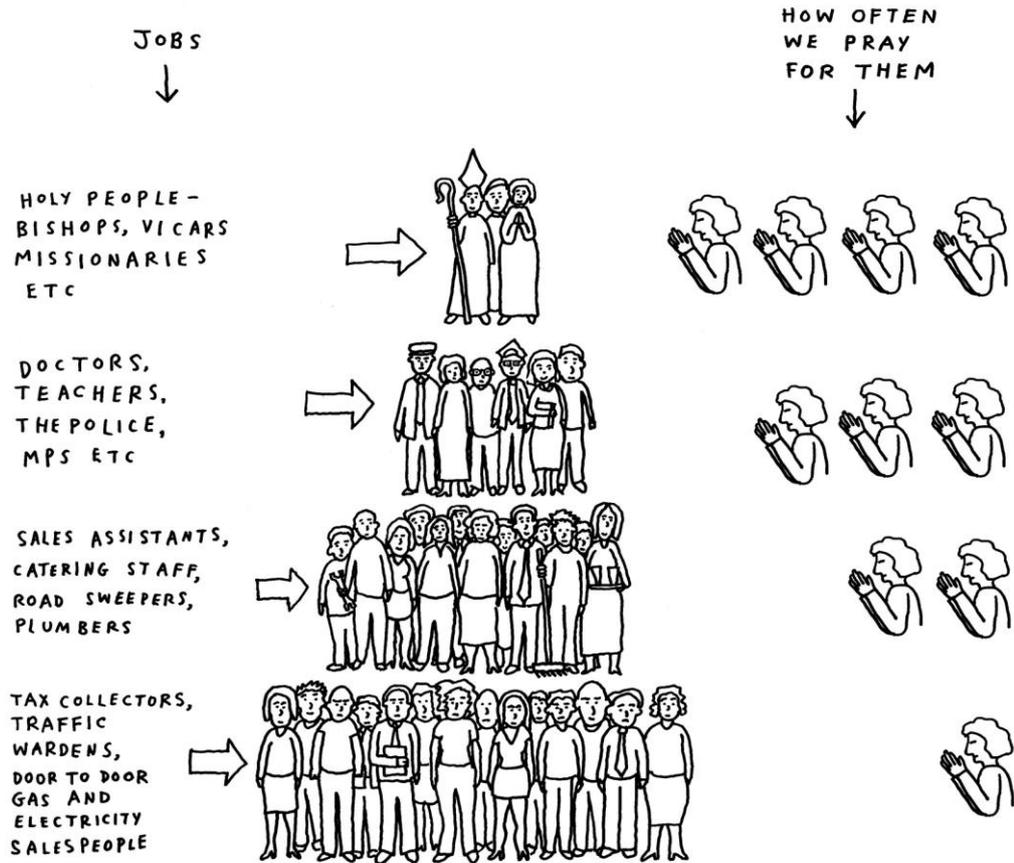
Who do we think is doing Christian work? Who has authority?

In what ways can the idea of having a 'ministry' at work be confusing?

Discussion

In what way does this cartoon reflect your experience of the church's thinking about how different kinds of work is valued? Is some work more worthy or spiritual than others? Are some vocations more important than others?

A HIERARCHY OF VOCATIONS



Two Prayers

Those who serve the community

God our Father, we remember before you with gratitude those who in their different capacities serve the community.

We pray for those who safeguard the public health and minister to the sick; those who provide for the welfare of the young and care for the elderly and infirm; those who serve in local government, administer the law and preserve the peace. Assist them in their varied duties, and deepen within us all the spirit of loving service; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The world of business

We pray, O God, for those whose lives are immersed day by day in the busy and complex world of commerce, with its many demands, responsibilities and temptations. Save them from being so absorbed in material wealth that they lose sight of the things of priceless value, the things that are worth more than all the money in the world. Give them integrity of character, that their lives may be sincere, their dealings honest, and their words truthful; we ask it in the name of Christ, the Lord of all life.

Frank Colquhoun

Question

What assumptions are being made in these 2 prayers by the same author?

Perspective

Godly Work?

Because peoples occupations often centre life's meaning so powerfully, does that mean that they are bending the knee in de facto obeisance to secular gods', kingdoms and morals of a workaday world, saving Sundays for Christian activity? What does the church say to someone who is out in the world of commerce and industry, someone whose Christian vocation seems challenged by service to idols of mammon. Typically, the church's response is a palliative suggestion that one's job can be a springboard for kindness towards others, a platform for keeping the Ten Commandments, an opportunity to make a witness, a location for a ministry of presence, or a context from which arrow prayers may be shot. This message implies that, while so-called secular careers have some value as a service to others, they possess no inherent value in their own right.

But what about the welder who believes welding per se is his Christian activity? What about the homemaker who believes she shares a personal delight with God in a good cheese soufflé. Would it be possible that God motivates the engineer who works on fuel cells or sustains a man who collects garbage? Could it be that the knack for finding good teaching methods is not just hard work but also the prompting and gift giving of the Holy Spirit? Could the promise of Christ be part of what motivates the designer who wants to improve sewage disposal?...Are not all these equally cases of godly work?

*From 'After Sunday: A Theology of Work' by Armand Larive
(Continuum, 2004)*

Discussion

What do you think about the ideas suggested here?

Question

What difference would it make to look at your work as God sees it?

During the week you might like to reflect on:



**How might you think
about your work as godly
work this week?**

Ponder

What did you learn from this session?

Prayer said or sung

Let All the World in Every Corner Sing

Let all the world in every corner sing, my God and King!
The heavens are not too high, His praise may thither fly,
The earth is not too low, His praises there may grow.
Let all the world in every corner sing, my God and King!

Let all the world in every corner sing, my God and King!
The church with psalms must shout, no door can keep them out;
But, above all, the heart must bear the longest part.
Let all the world in every corner sing, my God and King!

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