

know it is found in Gen. 1? What is the first commandment there given by God to our grandparents?

DANIEL-- Gen 1:26-28

This is the commandment known as **CULTURAL MANDATE**. Why do so few of us know about this commandment in this Very First page of the Bible? I have to go back to an explanation I gave you during the first in this series: The heritage of Greek thought. Though ancient Greek philosophy may seem pretty irrelevant to you in the Canada of Century 21 and you would just as soon leave that to esoteric academics, you should ask yourself why these Greek writings continue to be republished and republished, many times in any given century. **LIFT UP A COUPLE OF THEM.**

Why do people spend time and money on that old stuff? **REASON:** It underlies much of the Western worldview. It has given shape to our thought patterns, to **YOUR** thought patterns, even if you have never heard about it or read any of those books.

I told you a few days ago that one of the trends in that Greek thought was to denigrate the physical, to downplay the importance and value of our bodies.

As that influence crept into the church many centuries ago, it undermined our ability to read the Bible for what it actually says. The effect of it was as it were to put another pair of glasses on our nose that made us see things differently and blinded us to certain parts or meanings of the Bible. **(SWITCH TO SUN GLASSES)**. It blinded many of us to the truth that the material, the physical is very important in God's eyes--and therefore for us as well. The church began to think spiritually at the expense of the physical. Now it is good to think

spiritually, but not without including the material. We separated the spiritual and the material and forced ourselves to make the false choice between the one or the other. I talked about that last week.

THAT, I submit to you, is the reason most Christians failed to pay attention to this Cultural Mandate. It seems like such a physical thing: It seems more Christian and more pious to be concerned with the spiritual. It is the Great Commission that is important, bringing the gospel to unbelievers. It sounds more spiritual, more evangelical and not so grossly materialistic.

Of course, that Commission very important. We must never lose sight of it. I have spent 30 years as a missionary. But that Commission must be tied to this earlier commandment, Cult Mandate. We have separated something that was always meant to go together.

Paul Steven's is prof of Market Place theology at Regent College right here in Vancouver. He wrote this a couple of years ago: CRUX p. 11. So, this separation, this lack of understanding, this blindness has derailed a lot of church thinking and even the mission of many churches. Also the careers of many people.

From the creation story we have to realize that the Bible is a very worldly book. It honours the world. And our task in this world is also very worldly. The Christian religion is a worldly religion.

Why do we speak of calling only with respect to people working for the church? It is because many think that God CALLS us to church ministries, but he does not call us to other jobs for the simple reason that He is not really interested in these other jobs. He's not interested in

a carpenter or computer work or in politics. Those are worldly occupations outside of His range of concerns. So our thinking goes, for century after century. Churches give space and time to missionaries to report in the church service, but ever heard of a carpenter or plumber or engineer asked to report on his work? No, for we don't think of these as ministries. They are jobs. We engage in them only to make money. Remember the potato story of 2 weeks ago: what does Jesus have to do with selling potatoes?

In Gen. 1 we have learnt that God rejoices in his MATERIAL creation--as well as the spiritual. He revels in what He has made. When the stage is all set, everything in place, He created the first human beings, Adam and Eve. And then He defined them: We are His image. WE ARE GOD'S IMAGE. Can you imagine what that means? That means we have certain things in common with Him. When people see us, they should be able to see God's image in us. What a responsibility! Do you ever think about that as you move about in your corner of the marketplace? Wow!

Then the story goes on. God blessed them. Gave them shalom, peace, rest. A pleasant life of harmony and balance. And how are humans to achieve and enjoy that peace? By being fruitful, filling the earth and subduing it. By doing that, we reflect His image. In other words, we continue creating where He left off.

Thus we are given the task of ruling and subduing the WORLD, this physical creation in which He placed us, to develop it, to search for and promote its further development. To make the potentials God has placed in this creation come true, bring them to full bloom and

maturity. To unfold all that He placed in it. Science is an important human response to that task or calling. So, caring for and developing the world is not merely a job some of us have. It is not merely a way to put food on the table. It is HIS assignment to us as a human race. It is our ministry to the world as we fulfill our place within the marketplace. And as we do so, we reflect his image--

PROVIDED, PROVIDED we do it in His name and not for our own benefit alone. Not for money alone, or for power or pleasure or whatever.

THEN CAME THAT GREAT BREAK--The fall. No matter what we talk about in the Bible or in the world at large, or in the marketplace, that fall into sin unleashed a lot of new dynamics, destructive dynamics.

DANIEL GEN 3:16-19

We now enter a new era in history. Now people were going to go their own way, not God's way. However, that created urge within us to develop the world stayed. We did not lose it, but we **DID** distort it in the way we carry it out after the fall. Human relationships broke and were poisoned. Estrangement set in. Tending the garden had to continue, but it would now be a hard chore. Farming and work in general now only in sweat and pain. Giving birth now with agony.

In Gen. 4 we read about new developments.

DANIEL-- Gen 4: 19-24

Life goes on. People are still people. The original urge to develop is still there, but now used for different purposes. People invent tents. That was Jabal. Music and musical instruments were developed and

invented--the harp and flute. Bronze and iron tools appeared. You see, though now sinful, the human race continued to rule and develop the world. But it hardly imaged God anymore. But man became proud. Did you hear Lamech/s boast? He is stronger and more macho than God Almighty Himself. God avenges only seven times, but Lamech 70 X 7. Now he developed things for his own pride and greatness and purposes.

Then we get the story of the TOWER OF BABEL in Gen. 11.

DANIEL GEN 11:1-9

Great technology. Great architecture-- but to what end? To make a name for themselves. To invite the Olympics. No longer for God's glory but their own. No longer for justice but for reputation and name. Yes, the human race continued to be the human race after the fall. The strong for their own purposes, regardless how it affected the weak and the poor. That's how we do it today in this beautiful Canada. How many poor do you think profit from all these nice buildings here in Vancouver? Development? Much of it. Rule. Indeed, but we are told the rich are getting richer and the people on the street are increasing daily.

THE CULTURAL MANDATE WAS NEVER WITHDRAWN. God still wants us to rule, to develop His creation, but on His terms. The rest of the Bible makes clear that we are to develop it in a fair way, in a way that all benefit. That's hardly what's happening.

But God is still calling us to continue this task. It will never be finished. But he's calling us to do it so as to reflect His image--that is His love, justice, righteousness. To reflect his concerns.

God is therefore still calling us, His children, to carry on that task of developing the community, of science and technology, the trades and the professions, the labourer and the security guard. We all contribute to His plan for this world. The difference between us and those others is that we are concerned to demonstrate His image as we go about these tasks.

The conclusion to all of this is: all these tasks we have developed over the course of history, all this activity in the market place are our human responses to our created urge that God has placed in us. As we respond to that urge, we are doing His work, we are following His CALLING.

So, as you go about your daily work, whether labourer or CEO or whatever, be conscious that you are doing God's work. THAT is your human calling, your HOLY calling. Consider it such and you will find meaning in it beyond the money it may pay you.

In a recent VAN SUN ARTICLE it was explained that the Work Ethic has been lost in Canada and this loss has contributed to poverty, homelessness and all the other negatives we see around us.

I want you to listen carefully to the sentence I am about to say. THAT is the work ethic on which the Western world was built. As we grow away from that, our lives become meaningless and we sink into the morass, the swamp, the marsh into which our society is sinking today. We are losing our dignity and pride. We no longer know how to show respect. All of this is due at least partially to the meaninglessness with which we now experience our daily work.

Today I remind you of the dignity of work, every kind of work. There is no menial work, for it is all before the Lord. We all contribute to the development we are working at together. Lift up your head and be proud of your labour as you carry it out in the name of your Lord.

WE SPEND MORE WAKING HOURS IN THE MARKET PLACE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE. That market place is therefore THE great and the main arena for serving Him, for reflecting His image. Sanctify it then as His image.

Tomorrow when you step in your part of the market place--university, business, medical, whatever--remember, be conscious of your calling to reflect God in your work and relations. May you be a REAL person, a FULL person, one who lives up to his created purposes, namely to reflect God's mercy, justice and truth. THAT gives meaning to your work. THAT will keep you from getting bored. THAT is your proper work ethic.