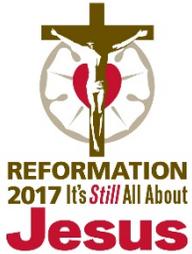


God's Masks: Christian Vocation

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“Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him” (1 Cor. 7:17).

We like things big and spectacular. That’s our entertainment culture, where Hollywood and the NFL are the largest churches in town. It’s upward mobility—better pay, bigger name, more benefits. The ordinary is frowned upon. What fifth grader hopes to be an accountant, or a stay-at-home mom? It’s always astronauts and quarterbacks.

Not so with our Lord. For Him, it’s not us climbing up, but Him coming down. That’s Christmas: God stepping down from His heavenly throne into a manger. It’s the cross: not what we do for God, but what He’s done for us.

As His glory was hidden in suffering, so He hides Himself in vocation to give us all that we need to support this body and life. Luther said God wears *masks*. He hides Himself—behind a father, changing his child’s diaper; behind a farmer, who sows the seed for your Saturday morning pancakes; behind a governor, whose bill saves countless unborn children. God hides Himself in society, home, and Church, wearing the *masks* of various vocations.

“Vocation” isn’t just for pastors. It’s a *calling*—a *holy* calling—by which God gives us neighbors to serve with good works. Luther said God doesn’t need your good works; your neighbor does. Our vocations identify our neighbors and what works are *good*—laid out nicely in SC Table of Duties: preachers and hearers; governors and citizens; husbands and wives; parents and children; bosses and workers; etc. We’ve got many vocations. I’m a son, citizen, brother, Christian, husband, father, pastor, student, and teacher (and more!). God hides Himself behind me to serve my neighbors, and behind each of these neighbors, God serves me.

Seeing vocations as divine callings, *masks of God*, we approach them differently. Work gets filled with divine importance. The ordinary things—picking up kids from basketball, mopping floors, filing taxes—they’re all *divine* works; the ordinary becomes the extraordinary place of God for man.

Truth is, we sin in our vocations. So SC 5 teaches us to examine ourselves “according to your station in life.” Thankfully, He hides Himself for sinners such as us! He uses the pastor-mask to proclaim forgiveness, and the widow-mask to sustain that preaching. He also feeds us with His own body and blood, by which we pray in the post-communion collect: “that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another.” That’s vocation: God calling us into self-sacrificial service on behalf of our neighbor.

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:4-7).

Further reading AC 6, 16, 18, 20; SC 1; LC 1; Ep 6; SD 6; SC Table of Duties; Eph 5-6; Rom 12-13; 1 Cor 7; Gene Edward Veith, *God at Work: Your Christian Vocation in All of Life*

Abbreviations

AC = Unaltered Augsburg Confession

Ap = Apology of the Augsburg Confession

SC = Small Catechism

LC = Large Catechism

SA = Smalcald Articles (exclusive of the Tractate)

Tr = Tractate on the Power and Primacy of the Pope

Ep = The Formula of Concord, Epitome

SD = The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration

Cat = Catalogue of Testimonies

NOTE: Articles and sections/paragraphs in the *Book of Concord* are denoted in Arabic numerals, separated by a period. Please note that the first number in citations of SC and LC points to the Chief Part; any numbers following the period point to the specific section/paragraph. Thus SC 1.8 does not point to the 8th Commandment, but to the explanation of the 4th.