

Smoky Mountain Reflections, August 2013

So as the summer winds down and comes to a close and we are getting ready for school to start again I find myself reflecting on 'vocation'. As many of you know my daughter Elisa, with the help of Scott her husband, added a new definition to my vocation list about six weeks ago. I am now a Grandfather, or as they say in bayou country Paw Paw. Just about the time all the little people in my family grew up, God blessed me with another playmate :-). (Of course, Harper has been giving me practice on how to be a good Paw Paw for the past two years now.) Besides the gift of my Grandson, what is this gift of vocation that God gives us?

The first thing we think of when we hear the word 'vocation' is work. What we do to earn a living is certainly part of our vocation, but it is one small part of a very big picture. If we step back we see how blessed we are to have our identity wrapped up in every aspect of our vocation. Who we are in our relationships at work, in our family, in our community, in our church, all of these put together are what make us who we are in our relationship with God and our neighbor. Unfortunately, we get things out of whack sometimes, messing up our priorities and spending too much time on one part of our vocation while neglecting other parts. We spend too much time at work or at play or with our family and our work or play or family suffer because of the imbalance. Another confusion may be that we take a role for ourselves that does not belong to us, or the reverse, we give our own responsibilities to another. Examples would be, trying to do our bosses' job or our Pastor's job or a government official's job when it is not ours to do. Sometimes we completely abandon our work or our spouse or our community, leaving others to carry our responsibilities as well as their own.

But God takes our broken sinful priorities and fixes them, washing off our feeble efforts and making them pleasing to God.

He takes our sinful selfishness and works faith in our hearts helping us to see we are not the god we make ourselves out to be. Our desires are not the most important thing....He is.

He takes our often-poor efforts to represent Him and helps us to see how we can best reflect our love for Him by bearing His name with respect and honor.

He takes our poor time management and leads us to be still and know that He is God. He does this in our daily lives with prayer, reading and devotions, and in our regular weekly time to receive the gifts he showers on us in word and sacrament, nurturing our souls to live out our vocations in the coming week.

He takes our rebellion against authority and turns it into honor, obedience, and submission to our parents, leaders, spouses, and employers.

He takes our murderous attitude which has no regard for all life created in His image and He turns it into the loving activities of family members and caretakers who nurture and serve the weak and vulnerable among us.

He takes our lust and fleshly desires and turns them into selfless giving of ourselves to our spouse. He blesses us with that already great gift, caring for our physical and emotional needs with the occasional arrival of a new family member.

He takes our greedy desires and turns them into concern for our neighbors' positions to the point that we would gladly sacrifice something of our own to prevent or restore a loss suffered by our neighbor.

He takes our dishonest thoughts and deeds and converts them through a contrite heart that seeks truth and justice, encouraging peace and reconciliation, willing to sacrifice our own justice for the benefit of others.

He takes our covetous hearts and minds and turns them into loving, caring souls that seek, with His help, to nip our sinful activities in the bud. He deals with them when they are only desires and helps us prevent them from becoming actions.

God takes our sinful thoughts and deeds and puts them into the gift of 'vocation' which converts sinful activity to God pleasing activity. Turning selfishness into selflessness, turning disobedience into standing for His truth, turning killing into defending family or nation, turning adultery into loving one's spouse, turning theft into protecting someone from harming themselves, turning lies into words spoken that benefit others at our own expense. God's rules do not contradict themselves when we do something within our vocation as parent, employer, leader, child, worker or citizen which on the surface appears to be a violation but is a cost to our reputation. We gladly pay this in service and love for others. Then, and only then, we can see the smiling face

of our Lord and Savior saying “Well done, my good and faithful servant, come into my presence and abide with me.”

Blessings on you all as you do your best to live out every aspect of your vocation in Christ
In His name
Pastor Portier