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Beacons of Light in Christ's Kingdom

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Beacons of Light in Christ's Kingdom

Abstract

"Even though most of us do not work in vocational ministry, we bear the responsibility to advance the cause of Christ in our given field."

Posting about living out our faith in our work from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<https://inallthings.org/beacons-of-light-in-christs-kingdom/>

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Beacons of Light in Christ's Kingdom

Derek Buteyn

This weekend I sat on the stage of the auditorium for the college where I work, and I looked out at the four hundred faces of the new students of whom my colleagues and I were formally welcoming to the start of their collegiate academic careers. As my eyes passed over the faces—some excited and hopeful, some scared and apprehensive—I started to think about what their lives would look like from this point forward and where life would take them once they left the social and academic safety net of college. I wondered what they were thinking: *Did I make the right career choice? Will I be successful (whatever that means)? Will my career matter, and will it make an impact?* Some will eventually receive their degrees as teachers, or for others, as engineers. Some will be graphic designers or direct ensembles. Others will eventually receive a degree and wind up doing something completely different than they ever thought they would.

In that striking moment, I realized that on a fundamental level, these students all had the same job. All were recruited to come here for college, yes, but more specifically, for something far grander and fulfilling than a career alone can provide. They would be sent out to make waves in the world—engaging, transforming, and drawing others to the good news of Christ.

When I looked out at those students, I saw a crowd that would become a force for change, each individual a beaming lantern of the gospel of Christ. While imperfect, they have a call to go out, teach, and baptize, recruiting new members into the Kingdom of Christ. And they work in view of that calling, just as we all must go to every nation, to every corner of the earth, leaving no stone unturned.

I was looking out at a group of missionaries.

Sure, some of those students will actually go to a distant country, establishing churches and preaching the good news to the unreached. However, most would be sent out to a different mission field—to infiltrate the realms of business and commerce, medicine and education, art and construction, politics and media. These callings are equally and crucially important work—

the good news of Jesus Christ is needed in the far ends of these fields as badly as it is needed in distant countries.

Even though most of us do not work in vocational ministry, we bear the responsibility to advance the cause of Christ in our given field. I think that it is easy for us to separate the sacred and the secular, to compartmentalize the call to ministry as something saved solely for the ordained. But our fields need followers of Christ to work at reclaiming a once perfect, now broken and not yet fully restored system, and to be truth-tellers to the other people within those systems.

When God created, he laid the framework for our occupations when he told us to fill the earth and subdue it. Because God saw and called his creation good, our informal ministry careers within the framework of the industry and occupation he created should be viewed as participation in the reconciling work of Christ, restoring what was broken by the fall.

The truth is that we are all ordained, appointed, and anointed to join in this work, and each of our jobs or careers serve as a medium to do so. Often God does his greatest work through the seemingly mundane—the day to day, the shepherd boys and the carpenters that are easily overlooked.

There is no question that we are called to certain careers and places at particular times, but within each of those seasons, we are presented with an opportunity to resist the present darkness and reclaim what Christ declares his own. We are up against an opposition that is working to keep the good news hidden. The absence of Christ followers in industry leaves a void that can only be filled by darkness because the devil will use any area to gain a foothold in the battle. In Romans, Paul says that we “do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of the heavenly places”—and this battle is taking place in a very real sense in board rooms, in the classroom, on the stage, and behind the computer screen. We need to open our eyes to this reality, understanding that our service in the workforce is not only to make a living, but also to participate in the cause of Christ, raising a banner for his Kingdom, occupying our places as beacons of the Light.

While we live in the tension of the “already and not yet,” we need to be taking steps forward, reclaiming and repairing the brokenness where we live and work. We live our faith through our works and by our work by having integrity and conducting ourselves with patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control, stepping forward as ambassadors of Christ in whatever occupation we are called to at that time. Our call, our responsibility, and our duty as co-heirs with Christ in the kingdom is to bring his truth into our places of work, to seek justice and mercy and compassion, and to live a truth that cannot and will not be hidden by darkness.