

Topic 5: The Economy

- I. We have two models that reinforce each other
 - a. Obviously, Deuteronomy and the laws and rules established there
 - i. Respect for people
 - ii. Respect for the God ordained human institutions
 - 1. Marriage
 - 2. Family
 - 3. Government
 - iii. A government that knows its role and sticks to it
 - iv. Respect for and proper stewardship of private property
 - v. Doing things God's way
 - b. These are civilizational building blocks
 - i. If these are properly in place a free and prosperous society will emerge through basic human actions
 - ii. "Little else is requisite to carry a state to the highest degree of opulence from the lowest barbarism, but peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice: all the rest being brought about by the natural course of things." – Smith TMS II.II.III.p.86
 - c. However, The Church is a model too
 - i. The church gives us more detail
 - ii. Details we see in other places but
 - iii. It is an institution where peace, easy taxes, and a tolerable administration of justice are practiced even if the rest of society is failing and falling apart
- II. The church exhibits some very important traits -the Church as a spiritual marketplace
 - a. A market economy needs a few essential elements and assumes a few essential traits about people
 - i. The three mentioned above
 - ii. Private property
 - iii. Voluntary cooperation
 - iv. People are different with
 - 1. Different knowledge, skills and abilities - Specialization
 - 2. Different desires/goals – these two lead to trade/exchange
 - b. Specialization
 - i. Spiritual gifts – people are gifted differently
 - 1. Eph 4:11
 - 2. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
 - 3. Exodus 35
 - ii. Many parts with different functions making up one body
 - 1. 1 Cor 12:12-24
 - iii. Specialization in other places

1. Genesis 4:20-21
2. 1 Chronicles with the Levite assignments
3. Building of the Tabernacle – Exodus 31:1-10

c. Trade

- i. Some preach
- ii. Some teach
- iii. Some administer
- iv. Some greet and extend hospitality
- v. Etc.
- vi. Service

d. All of this is in order to serve each other and to advance the mission of the church

e. **The church is a model for how a market should run BUT the market is also a model for how the church should run**

f. **Q: Does the church recognize and assign people based upon a true understanding of their skills and gifts? Or is the main qualification a pulse and not saying “no” quick enough?**

- i. Just because a man can preach does not mean he can teach, proclaiming the gospel and discipling are two different skills
- ii. Just because someone has been in faith a long time does not mean they are somehow gifted with the ability to do it all – they are not the Swiss army knife of spiritual gifts.
- iii. Willingness does not equal ability. Lack of willingness does not mean inability.
- iv. The church needs to assign the talented and gifted people to the right jobs. Not doing so means we are under performing, inefficient, failing to be good stewards of the talents we have been given. This means
 1. We each individually need to evaluate our gifts and identify what we can do – no one is called to be a bench warmer only
 2. Be honest with ourselves and each other and recognize that we may like doing something but it may not be what we are called to do – and by doing that task we are preventing others who can do it better from serving at their full potential. Also recognize that we may not want to do something but may be gifted and need to get up and get busy and quit making excuses.
 3. In the work world people get fired and hired and promoted and advanced, earn a profit and or a loss and that tells them clearly what they are good at doing and not.

Spiritual work is all the more important and we need to be just as clear and honest.

III. Theology of Business

- a. To fully understand how the church is model applied to the commercial life we need to establish a few facts and concepts
- b. Fact 1: Work/market place is where most of us will spend most of our waking hours**
 - i. Unless you are full time ministry it would be a special week if you spent more than 10 hours in church/life group etc.
 - 1. 3 hours Sunday morning
 - 2. 2 hours Sunday evening
 - 3. 1 hour midweek service
 - 4. 1 hours for meeting or event
 - 5. Total 7 hours
 - ii. It is not unusual to spend 10 hours in one day at work
- c. Fact 2: God knows this**
 - i. We were assigned to work from creation – it is a gift and a duty from God
 - ii. Jesus was a Jewish male which means he spent from age 12 in his trade commonly called carpentry but probably broader than that and included masonry as well – 18 years
 - iii. He spent 3 years in ministry
- d. Fact 3: Your primary ministry responsibility is your family but your workplace or the market place is a close second just based on time spent
- e. Conclusion we need to think about the commercial space differently

IV. **Q: What is a theological perspective on Commerce?**

- a. Does this even make sense?
 - i. God and mammon are to be separate – Mt 6:19 -
 - ii. No man can serve two masters - Mt 6:24
 - iii. Love of money pierces us through with many sorrows 1 Timothy 6:10
 - iv. Of course this is all true but it is about perspective
 - 1. **Anything** that interferes with our service to God is evil - money is just a common idol but not the only one
- b. So let's put commerce/money/business in proper perspective
 - i. One of the reasons we are warned about it so much is because it is important – there are more than 2,300 verses that mention or discuss money or closely related topics like wealth or possessions
 - 1. Just like food is important but gluttony is a sin, money and commerce is important but greed is a sin
 - ii. The NT and the Septuagint were written in Koine Greek

1. It was the common language because it was the language of international commerce at the time
2. Jesus's work on the cross was classically expressed in business terms it was called the Great Exchange (maybe Luther) or Wondrous Exchange (Calvin)
 - a. *mirifica commutation* - same root as for the word commerce
 - b. *Richard Hooker* – prayer is angelic commerce
3. Parables – often business people are the protagonists
 - a. Parable of the Sower Mt:13
 - b. The Unforgiving Servant Mt:18
 - c. Laborers in the Vineyard Mt:20
 - d. The two sons Mt:21
 - e. The owner and the tenants Mt:21
 - f. The faithful and wicked servants Mt: 25
 - g. The three stewards Mt: 25
 - h. The Good Samaritan Lk 10
 - i. Prodigal Son Lk 15

iii. Location of Ancient Israel

1. Between the Great Empires of the Day
 - a. Hittites and Assyrians to the North
 - b. Egypt and Cush/Sheba to the South
 - c. Persia, Babylon to the East
2. Which means it was along many of the major trade routes – MAP
 - a. Routes that existed for thousands of years
 - b. Abraham in his travels to Egypt
 - c. Ishmaelites when they bought Joseph
 - d. Way of the Sea – Some say IS 9:1
 - e. Kings Highway – Numbers 20:17, 21:22
3. The Case of Solomon
 - a. Peace
 - b. Tolerable administration of justice – Solomon the Wise
 - c. Easy Taxes? – easier than his son at least
 - d. Controlled the trade routes
 - i. Only King to have a trading fleet
 - ii. Traded with Hiram for Temple supplies
 - iii. Queen of Sheba was a trade delegation
 1. She heard of his greatness from traveling merchants