

a. Theology of Business

- i. All activity is brought under God's control and we offer evidence that maybe contrary to some prevailing attitudes in some parts of Christianity that even includes commerce
- ii. But we can drill down even further into elements of commerce
 1. Labor
 2. The business organization
 3. Entrepreneurship
 4. The Special Case of Banking

iii. Mt 25:34-40

1. The common understanding of this passage is acts of charity and mercy to the poor – the least of these – and of course that is true
2. But there is nothing in this passage that states that is the only way to feed clothes and care for people
3. There is no charity without production
 - a. Food, clothes and drink must be produced before they can be given out as charity
 - b. And I would also suggest that production is also part of feeding clothing and caring for people
4. Business as Kingdom Business
 - a. Business is not redemptive
 - b. Business is not on a salvation mission
 - c. But like everything else business is under God's control and serves His purposes and we who work in them and for them and with them or buy from them or just want a clearer understanding and appreciation for seeing God work in the world will do well to examine this
 - d. What does a business do? Basically a three step process
 - i. It acquires resources
 - ii. Mixes and modifies them based on the vision of an entrepreneur/management
 - iii. Produces a good or a service (or many) that it hopes people will like and buy
 - iv. For a profit
 - e. It is this profit part that has been an issue for many throughout the years
 - i. Not understanding it has lead to all sorts of bad things
 1. Charges of exploitation
 2. Envy
 3. Violence etc.

- f. Let's break this process down into its component parts and push it through our Christian lens but before we do we need to take a side tip
- g. **Q: There are four ways we can get what we need to live and thrive.**
- h. **Q: Before we list them let's ask a related question. Does God want us to choose the moral path to accomplish a goal?**
- i. **Q: Does He want us to be efficient (not wasteful)?**
 - i. **So what are the 4 methods:**
 - 1. **Steal it (Violent non-market transfer)**
 - 2. **Get a gift (Peaceful non-market transfer)**
 - 3. **Make it ourselves**
 - 4. **Exchange and trade – The Market place**
 - ii. **Which of these meets the double criteria we established, moral and efficient? 3 of these are moral and one is far more efficient than the others**
- j. **Though experiment on gift giving and self production**
 - i. **Acquires Resources – The Dominion Mandate and the Stewardship function**
 - 1. **Classically in economics we have three categories of resources:**
 - a. **Natural - Land**
 - b. **Human resources - Labor**
 - c. **Physical resources – Capital**
 - ii. **Gen 1:26-31- Humans have control over all natural resources to use them for our betterment**
 - iii. **But God owns it we are His stewards**
 - 1. **Some have seen that role as one of a preservationist – we must keep the natural world the way it is but that conflicts with the Dominion Mandate – subdue does not mean abuse but it does mean we are higher than it, it is here for us, it is not an object or worship nor is there anything holy about preserving it just for the sake of preserving it**

2. We are empowered and instructed to use it in a thoughtful, productive, sustainable way.
 - a. Sustainable is an overused word in this case I am using in way that is consistent with the Biblical command to leave an inheritance to our children.
 3. So how do we have Dominion and practice good stewardship?
 - a. Personally – take care of your property, don't pollute etc.
 - i. Good
 - ii. Small scale
 - iii. Inefficiencies
 - iv. Ex: Green lawns
 - b. More broadly
 - i. Business – has a vision on how to turn raw materials into things we need and want that makes our lives better
 - c. But businesses pollute
 - i. Trains derail
 - ii. Tanker leak oil
 - iii. Etc.
 - d. Accidents do happen and so do abuses – businesses are run and staffed by flawed sinful people
 - i. Many of these issues are due to poor property rights issues
 4. Business activity is the primary way we practice natural resource stewardship and dominion – it has its inefficiencies and issues but it is the primary way we turn raw materials into finished usable goods
- iv. Human Capital – Labor
1. Surely we are better off working for ourselves than for business
 2. Business exploits labor

- a. Tries to pay as little as possible
- 3. Absolutely, everyone in this room tries to pay as little as possible for what they buy
- 4. Business is not an employment center, they hire people to get stuff done.
- 5. But there are different cases to consider
 - a. Most people have skills and abilities that are not fully utilized unless they are part of a team
 - b. Working alone will be low or even no productivity
 - c. Mt 20:1-6 – Parable of the Landowner**
 - d. But even those who may be productive alone are reliant on support and a network even if they are not an employee of a business
 - e. We have a name for those that engage in Truly alone production – the rugged individual who is carving his own way with the help of no man – poor.
 - f. There are those that have a different vision – they may be entrepreneurs – we’ll get to that later
 - g. If you work alone you have to do it all – if you work in a team

v. Physical capital

- 1. Is about investing, the idea of spending time and resources to create tools that make us more productive
 - 2. Spend more time on this when we discuss investing but this is delayed gratification, the sacrifice of now for better tomorrow and the idea is rooted in the tents of our faith and we will discuss it in great detail soon.
- k. So this is stewardship – it is not the only kind but it is also not what many think of when they use the term, but the term means putting resources to their best use and that is exactly what businesses are trying to do.

