

LIVING PLANTED: SESSION THREE

Christian Duty

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, You have given Your planted people various roles and responsibilities in life. Grant that the fruit of your Spirit might flourish as we live in those roles and carry out those responsibilities. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Introduction

Read aloud Matthew 21:28–31a:

“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?’ They said, ‘The first.’”

1. What is the basic point of this parable?

The basic point of this parable is to remind us that the genuineness of one's commitment is not found in words alone, but in actions. In this sense, the call is to repent of our sins (“changed his mind”) and then go forth in righteousness (“went”). The new life we are given as we are forgiven is not just to be spoken about but also lived out daily.

Read aloud Luke 10:25–37:

“And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, ‘Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ He said to him, ‘What is written in the Law? How do you read it?’ And he answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.’ And he said to him, ‘You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.’ But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’”

2. From memory or by reading Luke 10:30–37, how does Jesus answer this question? Who is our neighbor?

Jesus answers this question by telling the parable of the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan stops to help the wounded man on the side of the street even when the religious leaders would not. He is put forth as the example of what it means to love one's neighbor. Therefore, the basic principle is that our neighbor is anyone in need who is close enough for us to help. We have people all around us all the time who fit this very definition of neighbor. Most of them live with us in our homes, communities and churches.

Read aloud 1 Corinthians 7:17:

“Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches.”

3. In what areas of life have we been given Christian duties to perform? What roles have been given to us?

While you may allow for open discussion of this point for a while, in the end please direct the participants to the following ideas: Since we are called to direct our love by following the commandments and helping those in need who are closest to us, we must ponder who those people are. The church for many years has suggested that the easiest way to do this is to recognize that most of life occurs in three areas. We live out our lives in the home, in the church and in the community as members of the state.

Read aloud Colossians 3:18–22, 4:1:

“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged. Bondservants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. ... Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.”

4. What roles can one be given in the home? Are these roles important to God? To life in general?

One can be a husband or wife, a parent or child, a boss or a worker. The first two sets of roles are probably obvious. The last might need a little more explanation. Why is talk of masters and bondservants placed here alongside talk of the home? We in the modern world tend to think of work as an entirely separate area of life. However, in most places and at most times, one's work was found in the home. Whether the home engaged in agriculture, some sort of metalworking or the production of some other goods, most people found their daily work in their homes. That is why the Bible includes talk of masters and bondservants here. These roles are not always highlighted by our culture as things of importance, and yet simple reflection on any of them will reveal their true value. What would the world be like without husbands and wives, parents and children, bosses and workers? The duties each of these people has are largely responsible for the life we live each day. By including specific instructions for them in his Word, God makes clear that they are critically important to him.

Read aloud Galatians 6:6:

“Let the one who is taught the word share all good things with the one who teaches.”

5. What roles can one be given in the church? Are these roles important to God? To life in general?

While each of us may end up playing many specific roles in our life together in the church, the Scriptures give two basic roles that we fulfill. Either we are teachers of the Word, or we are hearers of the Word. In more common language, we are either pastors or laypeople. Again, through these simple roles, God ensures that His people are given His wondrous gifts and that those He calls to serve are cared for and respected. Again, by giving specific instructions in His Word, God makes clear the importance of these roles.

Read aloud Romans 13:1:

“Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”

6. What roles can one be given in the community? Are these roles important to God? To life in general?

One may either be a ruler or a citizen. Again, think about how much of our life is affected by how well rulers govern and how well citizens fulfill their responsibilities. Again, God includes specific instructions for these roles because of how important they are to his design for the world.

Read aloud:

God does not leave us on our own to figure out how we are to love or who we are to love. He has given us His commandments in order that we might know how to love, and He has given us our roles and responsibilities in life in order that we might know who to love. The fruits of His Spirit, according to His promise and power, come forward in all of these areas. Our neighbor is loved, and our purpose is found.

CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, You have called us to love You and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We thank You for the neighbors that You have given to us in our homes, in the church and in our communities. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we might walk in Christian love as we fulfill our Christian duty to them. In Jesus' name, Amen.