

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Lent is a season of repentance as we reflect on why our Lord died on the cross for us. But Lent is also about catechesis, because Lent is a catechetical season.

Tonight, we continue to make our way through the Christian “house rules” on how we deal with each other. These “house rules” serve as our groundwork on our Lutheran worldview of vocation. These vocations are the duties or responsibilities that we each owe to our neighbor.

As a reminder: Luther’s intention in including the Table of Duties was to serve us as our guide – *the Third Use of the Law* – in how we ought to live in this world and what is our duty to one another. But as it always is, when the Law is at play, we often hear the Law as its Second Use – *mirror*, because the Law always accuses, but again, the primary use and focus of the Table of Duties is to encourage us as we live out our lives in the various vocations that God has placed you and I in.

Tonight, we will continue our focus on the first of the Three Estates: family, as we consider the next two pairs in the Table of Duties: “To Workers of All Kinds” and “To Employers and Supervisors.”

I have served in the Office of the Holy Ministry since 2017, but I had jobs prior to my calling as pastor. Like many of you, I was employed by McDonald’s. There, I certainly saw workers of all kinds. Some were always on time and did what they were told to do. Others, were, well, lazy. One day, as the customers were low, my manager attempted to add more shake mix to the ice cream machine. Key word: attempted. As he poured the mix, he lost his handling of the bag filled with mix and it spilled all over the floor. As I was waiting on an order to grill, I immediately stepped in to help and cleaned up the mess. No one else stepped in. All just stood there.

That following day, I was unexpectedly called into the manager’s office. He thanked me and gave me a raise – 10 cents. I said, I was just doing my job. He said, “Exactly.”

Elsewhere, I had worked as a cashier at a Meijer store. At each time my lane was empty, I would see if anything was placed where it didn’t belong.

My longest career prior to the pastoral ministry was that of a journalist. While at the newspaper, I saw and heard so much: both good and bad.

Each job I had, I learned how essential each employee is to their employer. I also learned how a job can also become unpleasant. But each job prepared me to better understand the doctrine of vocation. Through each job, I became better equipped to understand how each Christian serves in his or her vocation of work.

Luther's selections in the Table of Duties under "To Workers and All Kinds" and To Employers and Supervisors" come from Ephesians 6:5-9: ***"Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would serve Christ, not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with Him."***

These words of St. Paul may surprise us as he is addressing slaves and their masters. Now, you may sometimes feel like your job is a form of slavery, but we certainly aren't slaves in that sense. But these words of St. Paul certainly apply to us.

Just as slavery was an established part of the Greco-Roman world that kept the world moving, today's relationship between workers and their employers are much the same. We need workers to do the work, and we need employers to give workers their proper wages.

For slaves and employees, the key thing to remember is their relationship to Jesus Christ. Just as we are called to obey Christ, we are also called to obey our masters and employers. St. Paul teaches that Christians are to work as if the work was done for Christ. And that is true.

On the other hand, this Scripture also teaches that if we don't put our best effort forward, it is God for whom we are cheating. As it often goes, when the cat is away – the employer – the mice will play, the employees. So, being lazy, or choosing to not do a thorough job, is a sin. They are sins against God.

But it doesn't stop there. Employers have an important vocation, too. Paul writes, *“Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that He who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with Him”* (Ephesians 6:9).

So, both the employee and the employer are both working for Christ. In keeping the Fourth Commandment in view, the employer is also to admonish and discipline when a worker does not perform their duty.

But as Paul says, this needs to be done out of concern and in Christian love toward their neighbor. It is not to be done in a way that threatens or provokes just because the boss is on a power trip. It must be done fairly. For the boss' boss is Jesus Christ.

This is our calling as employees and employers that each Christian owes to each other. But there are times that we fail. There are times that we fail our God-given vocation as employee. There are times that we fail our God-given vocation as employer.

Thanks be to God that Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to later be numbered with the transgressors – you and me – as He would hang on the cross for us. He hung dying for all those times you were lazy and didn't give your best effort. He hung dying for all those times you abused your power and didn't treat your workers fairly. But by His death, Jesus won forgiveness for all of those sins. And then three days later, He rose from the dead for our justification.

In His resurrection, Jesus began the restoration of life as it was intended to be when He created Adam and Eve and put them in the Garden to work it and to keep it. So, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we have been given new life through Holy Baptism as we now seek to fulfill the Christian “house rules” of our various callings. So, just as Christ served us, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we now desire to serve our neighbor. Amen.

*The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,  
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.*

**+ SOLI DEO GLORIA +**