



LIVING PLANTED: Session Five

Duty to the Lord

Opening Prayer:

Almighty God, You have assigned lives to each of us. They are filled with opportunities to serve our neighbors. Grant us your Spirit to serve them well in order that our love of them might serve as evidence of our love of You. Thank You for first loving us in and through Jesus. Amen.

Introduction

Read Aloud:

In the previous four sessions, we have reflected on how God has graciously and without any merit on our part planted us by the Living Water Jesus in His Kingdom. We have been reminded that as such well-watered trees, the fruit of the Spirit is to be found growing in our lives. We have talked about how that fruit is to be shown forth in three areas of life (home, church, and state) and in the roles we have in those areas. We learned that our work there is even more important than dreams we may have that appear to stretch beyond those responsibilities. Finally, we noted that in certain roles we are given authority to serve others and in other roles we are to respect the fact that God has given someone with authority to watch over us. In this last session, we learn that all doing all of this is ultimately about showing forth that we are so amazed at God's love and grace shown to us in Jesus, that we want to serve him, follow his voice, and receive his word of commendation on the last day.

Read aloud Matthew 25:34–40

³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Q: While our Christian duty is first and foremost directed at our neighbors, what is ultimately the reason that we do these things?

A: We do these things in service to God since He has done everything for us. Jesus, the Judge, recognizes this on the last day. While the neighbor certainly benefitted from our actions just as God intended, Jesus receives such care as an act of love towards Him. While we can serve God directly by keeping Him first, using His name properly, and remembering the Sabbath, we also serve him indirectly by loving our neighbors.

Read aloud Psalm 119:12–16

¹² Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes! ¹³ With my lips I declare all the rules of your mouth. ¹⁴ In the way of your testimonies I delight as much as in all riches. ¹⁵ I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. ¹⁶ I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word.

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Q: Why does one maturing in faith follow God's ways and live contently in the order He has arranged in His creation? Is it primarily because they must do them or else or is there an even better reason?

A: The mature Christian understands that God's ways are truly good in every way. While God's commands alone should motivate us to walk in His ways, God's promises truly cause us to love His ways. His ways are not burdensome to us once we realize that through them God is not taking something good away but is giving us the abundant life He promised. Specific commands that we have read that are given to people in specific roles can at first glance seem like nothing but a burden to follow until we remember that following in those ways gives us this abundant life. The things we often want otherwise would simply result in trouble for us.

Read Aloud Psalm 23:1–3

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Read aloud John 10:2–4

² But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

Q: How does the picture of God in Christ being our Shepherd help further this understanding that the ways of the Lord are good and that the duties we have been given to do are good as well?

A: Sheep follow good shepherds precisely because they know that the ways in which they will lead them will bring them to food and water, rest and safety. They know that in following their voice, they will be well. Likewise, the mature Christian understands this as well. They come to trust the way of the Lord because they know the Lord and know that He is good. They follow even when they do not in the moment understand the way that the shepherd might be leading.

Read aloud Matthew 25:14-15,19–21

¹⁴ "For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. ¹⁵ To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁹ Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.' ²¹ His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.'

Q: What does this parable teach us about how much God values the duties He has given to us to do in life?

A: God values them so much that on the last day He will commend us regarding the doing of them. Now of course, this is an act of pure grace in one sense since He could also point out all of our failures in these roles as well. But God values the fruit that comes from His planted trees so greatly, that He rejoices in them and mentions them as His people are entering into His eternal joy by grace. Those found without any fruit are proven to no longer be trees planted by Jesus and therefore do not enter His joy.

Read aloud:

God has planted us by Jesus. He has given us roles to which He has assigned duties. We should value these roles and duties since we know that God and His ways are good. We trust that God according to His promise will receive our work as an expression of our love towards Him because of His love of us. We will repent when we fail, rejoice in His forgiveness, and live in the new life He gives to us through His Spirit.

Closing Prayer:

Almighty God, You have planted us in Your Kingdom. Keep us forever by Jesus, the Living Water, that we might bear fruit for you. Amen.