Mission-shaped Generosity Session 9 Talents 1

Everything is Spiritual

The Sacred-Secular Divide may have its roots somewhere in the Enlightenment, when science became the domain of fact, and religion the domain of belief. But actually, it can be traced further back than that, to an early church heresy, called docetism.

Docetism was the belief that Jesus was not actually human but only divine; that he didn't have a real or natural body, but actually only an apparent or phantom one. This thinking developed into dualism, which says that the body is evil and something to be freed from, while the spirit is good and comes from God.

These heresies were fought hard by the early church Fathers as unorthodox. They were, basically, a lie. And in the same way, the sacred-secular divide is also a lie. It's a lie that distorts God's character and severely limits our everyday enjoyment of God. Tragically, it also severely limits our understanding of our everyday role in God's purposes. And our understanding of the way God has shaped us, and calls us and partners with us in God's mission.

- Can you identify with the idea that our lives can feel split into what feels 'holy' and what feels unholy?
- Do you think there are parts of our lives that are more important to God than others?
- Do you sometimes feel there's a hierarchy of activities - the sacred is 'better' than the 'secular'?

The author Os Guinness reportedly said: "Many Christians have a faith too privatized. Privately engaging, publicly irrelevant." The SSD is responsible for this 'privatisation' of faith, because as a worldview, it relegates faith to a small area of life as something private, having nothing to do with the majority of our daily lives. It is outside of the public sphere

- Discuss whether you think there are some parts of culture/society? E.g. politics, music, socialising, leisure activities, the workplace, school…

Shouldn't we be careful, though, not to take on everything from 'out there' in case it 'pollutes' us?' Most of us will falsely interpret the call for Christian holiness to be grounds for removing ourselves from culture. But holiness/righteousness is about the grace of God to conform us to God's commands and be Christlike; and unrighteousness is rebellion against these things. Unrighteousness can be found just as much in the supposedly sacred arena as in the secular. When we mix holiness up with the SSD, we lose all sight of the redeeming power that Christ has affected into all of Creation.

Tish Warren Harrison in her book *Liturgy of the ordinary*, says,

'…we are sanctified - made holy - not in the abstract but through our concrete vocation. Christian holiness is not a free-floating goodness removed from the world, a few feet above the ground. It is specific, and in some sense, tailored to who we particularly are.'

- How might you answer the call to be diligent in God's call to transform culture rather than remove ourselves from it?
- Paraphrasing Tish Harrison Warren, what does 'working out our holiness through who we are' mean to you?

Read the following verses, and perhaps the verses before and after, and think about

- What is happening in this passage? What does this tell me about God?
- What does this passage make me feel? What might God be saying to me through these words?
- How do I respond to this passage? What might God want me to do?

Romans 8.39

Colossians 1.16
Ephesians 4.6
Acts 17:25,27