Sacred or Secular?

Dear Culture Contrarians,

The idea that some jobs are secular and some are sacred is deeply seated in our worldviews. But is such a distinction biblical? Most people I know would argue that it is more spiritual to be a pastor than a banker. A teacher has a higher calling than a sales clerk at Home Depot. An evangelist is rewarded by God more than an electrician.

It seems to me that this cultural dichotomy finds its roots in Old Testament theology. In Israel the tribe of Levi was set apart from the other sons of Jacob; they were all assigned to Aaron for service as priests, but one of Levi’s sons, Kohath, was responsible for the most holy things (Numbers 4:4).

The notion of a hierarchy of holiness plays well into Roman Catholic theology. In that system, there is no future for Israel, the OT prophecies of future blessing on Israel are spiritualized and applied to the church, and the clergy of that institution see themselves as superior to their parishioners whose sins they forgive. Again, is this biblical?

The New Testament sees all believers as part of a family (Eph. 3:14-15); we are fellow citizens and part of the same household (Eph. 2:19). While some interpret 1 Peter 2:5 and 9 (references to believers as a holy priesthood) as referring only to Jewish Christians (Peter writes 1 Peter to the “sojourners of the dispersion,” Jewish believers who have been scattered) the Book of Revelation makes it clear that the goal is that all believers will be kings and priests (Revelation 1:5-6, 5:10, 20:6). All believers are priests of God. When we walk with the Lord, we are all His servants with one Master over us all. We are brothers and sisters within the same family. Elders, deacons, evangelists, and pastor-teachers are not called to a higher standard than other men in the body of Christ. We are all called to walk by the Spirit and follow His leadership. Building a sermon is not more sacred work than building a house. Caring for those who attend the church I serve is not more spiritual than caring for my bees. What matters is walking by the Spirit; He will direct your paths and even lead you into what your heart desires (Psalm 37:4-5). Perhaps God does have a missionary map. If so, you are on it!

My love to you all,