

# Restoring the Marketplace to Gods Economy by Transforming the Way we Work

Mike McLoughlin • Work As Ministry

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In 1995, God gave a word to a marketplace intercessor, Jan Christie. She was praying for a new ministry to encourage Christians to live their faith at work. She asked God what He was doing with this new ministry. His reply was "I am going to restore the marketplace to my economy."

Ed Silvos, author of Anointed for Business, believes God is doing just that. He teaches Jesus came to seek and save THAT which was lost. (Luke 19:10) The 'that' includes souls but also includes creation AND the work that humans do wisely ordering God's good creation. For a fuller exposition of this principle read Colossians 1:15-20. Paul disuses how in Christ "all things" (including the marketplace) hold together and through Christ God is reconciling all things (including work) to Himself. Specifically, it includes the economic work that humans do in the marketplace. God's economy is what a redeemed marketplace looks like.

This is not about attempting to reconstruct the economy around biblical law. It is, however, about working differently. In October 2004, I had the opportunity to hear first-hand the story of Riverview Bank in Otsego, MN. It was the story of how God called Chuck Ripka to pastor his new bank, teaching people to pray with their customers and leading customers and staff to Christ. As I was listening to Chuck tell his story I thought to myself, how would banking be done in God's economy? So I put a question to Chuck Ripka. "How do you do banking differently?"

Chuck did not have a ready answer. He has not really thought about how the gospel is having an impact on the work of banking. His focus is soul winning. For him, his work provides a platform for soul winning, a "front" for full-time ministry. For others work is a "front" for soul sanctification, a place where trials and tribulations test our spiritual mettle in preparation for heavenly bliss. For others, work is a "front" for Christian service, a vehicle for God's vocational service in the marketplace. For others, work is a "front" for social justice, providing the dignity that economic disparity denies the poor.

As long as work is a "front" for something else, the marketplace will never be redeemed. Until we see that Jesus came to seek and save "work" itself we will not give it the attention required for the marketplace to be restored to God's economy.

However, if we start with the premise that work, as well as souls, is to be redeemed then we need a theology of work that will empower us to do work differently. This approach applies to all forms of work that come together to create God's economy. Chuck Ripka needs a theology of the work of banking to do banking differently. All people of faith at work in the marketplace need a theology specific to their work to do their work differently. We need a theology of communication, a theology of real estate development, a theology of service work, a theology of retail sales, a theology of manufacturing, even (God forbid!) a theology of network marketing!

I believe God is positioning the faith-at-work movement to lead in the cause of doing work differently, of transforming the marketplace into His economy. All of the various faith at work fellowships that exist in the various economic sectors have a mandate to create a theology of work for their sector so that their work in their workplace in that industry in that sector can be restored to God's economy.

This is done by reflecting on their marketplace context, bringing that context and that work to God. In prayer, they ask the question: "Since you came to seek and save that which was lost, how are you saving the work we do? Given that you want to restore our work to your economy, how then shall we work differently?"

These are practical as well as theological questions. They involve thinking through the contemporary real-world situation at work. It is not as simple as finding a few proof texts from the Bible and trying to make application to your work context. Rather, it means rolling up your sleeves, getting involved and identifying with the pain, the frustration and the challenges of real work in today's marketplace. It means following the incarnate Christ as He leads us into the lost world of work. In sum, it means being crucified with Christ at the point of maximum pain in your work context so that you and the work you do can be raised with Christ into a new creation and a new way of working, a way of working that will restore the marketplace to God's economy!