

Luther on the Vocation of a Prince

3 Virtues of a Government Leader

In his commentary on Psalm 82, Luther identified 3 responsibilities for a prince/leader:

1. **Support and aid the Church.**
2. **Help the weak and vulnerable.**
 - The marginalized
 - The fatherless
 - The hopeless
3. **Restrain and punish evil.**

Demonstrating that **government** has an important vocation within God's ordering of society.

Supporting the Church

Luther argues that a **wise prince** should support pastors and the Church rather than primarily seeking personal glory. Support might include:

- **Providing** pastors with education, housing, and salary.
- **Protecting** the Church's work.

The prince may not receive obvious earthly glory for doing this, but the work has tremendous value before God.

The 2-fold Work of the Pastor

Vertical Work

The pastor's first task is to **proclaim the Gospel**. The pastor wants people to know:

- Their sins are forgiven.
- **Salvation** is found in Christ.
- **God's grace** is a gift.
- **Christ** provides righteousness before God.

Horizontal Work

The pastor also **teach** people:

- How to **fulfill their vocations**.
- How to **develop virtue**.
- How to **serve those around them**.
- How to **live according to God's will**.

Ethics as Learning to See Rightly

- The **world** as God's creation.
- **Situations** through God's reality.
- **Other people** as creatures made by God.
- **God's truth**.
- **God's will**.
- **Our responsibilities** toward others.

This connects to Aristotle's fourth cardinal virtue, **Prudence**, the ability to:

- **See** a situation clearly.
- **Think rightly** about what is happening.
- **Assess** the circumstances.
- **Determine** what should be done.

Developing the **wisdom** to recognize what faithful action looks like in real situations.

The Importance of Community

Christians Do Not Live Alone

There is no such thing as a completely independent Christian. God places Christians into community: **The Church — the congregation**.

Human beings cannot become everything God created them to be in isolation. We need:

- **Other Christians**.
- **Teachers**.
- **Pastors**.
- **Families**.
- **Congregations**.
- **Shared practices**.

MacIntyre's 3 Characteristics of Community

A healthy community requires 3 things in which ethical formation takes place:

- 1. Common Creed:** What the community believes.
- 2. Shared Narratives:** The stories that tell the community who it is.
- 3. Shared Practices:** The things the community regularly does together.

The Church's Creed (What We Believe)

The Church has explicit creeds:

- **Apostles' Creed**
- **Nicene Creed**
- **Athanasian Creed**

The creeds articulate:

- **What** Christians believe.
- **How** Christians understand reality.
- **What it means** to be human.
- **How human beings** fit into God's creation.
- **How people** should live with one another.

The Church's creeds provide a **foundation for Christian identity**.

The Church's Shared Narratives

Narratives are more than entertaining stories. They help communities understand:

- **Who** they are.
- **Where** they came from.
- **What** they value.
- **How** they should live.

For Christians, these narratives include:

- The **life, death, and resurrection of Christ**.
- **Biblical stories**.
- The **history** of God's people, the Church, and the Lutheran Church.

These stories **help Christians see themselves** within God's larger story.

The Church's Shared Practices

Practices are repeated activities that:

- **Reinforce** the community.
- **Teach** its values.
- **Form** its members.
- **Express** its identity.

Examples in the Church include:

- **Divine Service.**
- **The Church Year.**
- **Worship.**
- **Scripture readings.**
- **Prayer.**
- **Church gatherings.**
- **Festivals and celebrations.**
- **Congregational meals and fellowship.**

These practices may sometimes seem ordinary, but they bind Christians together and contribute to Christian formation.

Why Community Is Essential to Ethics

There Is NO Ethics Apart from Community

Ethics always has a context. Examples include:

- Lutheran ethics.
- Medical ethics.
- Business ethics.
- Buddhist ethics.

The question is: **What community & worldview provide the foundation for this ethic?**

When a community loses its Creed, Narratives, & Practices it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain a coherent ethical framework.

The Church and the Family

The family exists within and ultimately serves God's purposes through the Church.

Families raise children to become:

- **Members** of Christ's Church.
- **Faithful citizens**.
- **Servants** of the world.

The **Church** therefore has a **central role** in Christian formation.

The Church is NOT merely an institution for the present age. It **points toward** what God will accomplish when Christ returns.

The Church is: **A foretaste of God's restored creation**.

Christ will return and make all things new. Therefore, **Christian life in the present** is connected to God's future purposes.

The Purpose of Life

The purpose of life is **NOT** primarily:

- **Accumulating** possessions.
- **Maximizing** pleasure.
- **Traveling** to as many places as possible.
- **Building** wealth.
- **Measuring** success by the size of one's family.

Instead: **The purpose of life is to** live faithfully **in the vocations God has given us and serve those around us.**

The Church's Responsibility

Cultivate: **Love for the Creeds**

Teach Christians what they believe: **Understanding of the Catechisms and Confessions**

Give Christians a clear theological framework: **Knowledge of Scripture**

Teach the whole counsel of God's Word: **Love for the Biblical Narratives**

Tell God's story to each generation: **Faithfulness in Worship and Practice**

Live together according to the Church's identity. These things bind Christians together and teach them how to live.

The Christian Telos/Goal

To be the creature God created me to be, for the sake of those around me.

This goal is accomplished:

- **Within** God's creation.
- **Through** vocation.
- **In** community.
- **In** cooperation with the Church.
- **Through** receiving the Gospel.
- **Through** learning God's Law.

Habituation

Becoming trained through repeated practice.

We learn how to live faithfully by **doing faithful things repeatedly**. Examples include:

- **Worship.**
- **Prayer.**
- **Devotions.**
- **Prayers before meals.**
- **Celebrating Easter.**
- **Celebrating Christmas.**
- **Participating in the Church's common life.**

These *repeated practices* shape our character.

Ethics Is Learned Through Practice

Ethics CANNOT simply be learned by:

- **Reading** a book.
- **Studying** a text.
- **Making intellectual decisions** about morality.

Instead: **Ethics is learned through habituation.**

We *practice* the **Christian life** until faithful behavior becomes increasingly natural.

Ethics becomes habit. Good habits can:

- **Shape** character.
- **Train** desires.
- **Form** Christian identity.
- **Make** faithful actions more natural.
- **Bring** us into greater harmony with God's purposes.

The Role of Parents

Parents should intentionally **habituate their children into the Christian life**. This includes:

- **Bringing** children to worship.
- **Teaching** God's Word.
- **Praying** together.
- **Practicing** Christian traditions.
- **Teaching** God's will.
- **Modeling** faithful Christian living.

Christian formation does not simply happen automatically. It requires intentional training.

The Role of Pastors

Pastors should NOT be afraid to:

- **Teach** God's will clearly.
- **Explain** how God's Law applies to daily life.
- **Teach** concrete Christian responsibilities.
- **Encourage** Christian practices.
- **Train** people for faithful vocations.

This is **NOT legalism**. It is faithful pastoral care.

People need to know what faithful Christian living looks like in a broken world.

Sanctification

Throughout the course, Dr. Biermann deliberately avoided the word **sanctification** because the term can create confusion. Some people misunderstand sanctification as:

- Merely becoming more aware of God's holiness.
- **Legalistic works righteousness.**
- An unhealthy cooperation with God.
- Something that happens automatically.

The biblical terminology sometimes overlaps with justification, adding further complexity.

Dr. Biermann uses the concept in the sense reflected in **Augsburg Confession Article VI:**

New obedience. The Christian:

1. Has been claimed by Christ.
2. Knows the **righteousness received through Christ.**
3. Knows that **sins are forgiven.**
4. Now strives to live according to God's will.

This obedience is **NOT** intended to:

- **Earn** God's favor.
- **Earn** salvation.
- **Gain** points with God.
- **Force** God to bless us.

Instead: **We obey because this is what God created us to do.**

Faithful Christian living accomplishes 2 things: 1. **Honors God** & 2. **Serves the Neighbor**

Therefore, sanctification is NOT primarily about becoming impressive or spiritually successful. **It is about faithfully becoming the creature God created us to be.**

The Reality of the Old Adam

Good works sometimes come naturally. Other times they require:

Long training, practice, discipline, and obedience.

Formation Is a Community Responsibility

The Church should take seriously its responsibility to **form people into the ways of Christ**:

- **Teaching.**
- **Worship.**
- **Practice.**
- **Discipline.**
- **Encouragement.**
- **Repetition.**
- **Formation.**
- **Habituation.**

Christian growth is NOT merely automatic. The community helps shape Christians into faithful servants.

The Lutheran Ethic

NEVER ultimately focused on self; **ALWAYS** focused on the neighbor.

The Christian delights in the forgiveness received from Christ.

But that forgiveness is **NOT** an excuse to do whatever we want.

Instead, forgiveness frees Christians to:

- **Stop worrying** about earning God's favor.
- **Stop trying to justify** themselves.
- **Spend their lives** serving others.
- **Live according to** God's will.

Die to Self

- **Put aside** selfish ambition.
- **Reject** self-centeredness.
- **Stop making life about** personal achievement.

Live for the Neighbor

- **Serve.**
- **Love.**
- **Sacrifice.**
- **Work faithfully.**
- **Fulfill one's vocation.**

The Christian is freed by the Gospel for a life of *active* love.

The Lutheran Ethic in One Sequence

God's Grace



Forgiveness in Christ



Freedom from Self-Justification



Life in the Church



Teaching + Creeds + Narratives + Practices



Habituation and Formation



Faithful Vocation



Service to the Neighbor



Living as God's Created Person



Participation in God's New Creation