



**Issues, Etc.**<sup>TM</sup>

*Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio*

## TRANSCRIPT

*Rev. Todd Wilken, Host*

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# "Christian Vocation, Part 4: Employers & Employees"

**Guest:**

**Pastor Peter Bender**

**Pastor of Peace Lutheran Church and Director of the Concordia Catechetical Academy  
Sussex, WI**

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**WILKEN:** At least for adults – most adults – this is where you spend a lot of your daylight hours. It's what you spend a lot of your daylight hours doing. You may go home at 5 or 6 in the evening, but the next day, you know you've got to get up every weekday and go to work. Now, you may love it, you may hate it, you may be living out your dream job or for you, it's just the j-o-b, it's just the paycheck. Maybe you're working your way up through the ranks of

whatever business you're in, trying to get where you want to be. But it is, in very real terms, what you do. You ask someone, "What do you do?" They'll tell you what they do for a living. Now, there's nothing wrong with that. We have been created to work and to labor. Even before the Fall, there was work to do. That labor has been tainted and made laborious by the fall into sin, but we are still called to work. So how do we

understand ourselves as employees? How do we understand ourselves as employers?

Greetings, and welcome to *Issues, Etc.* on this Friday afternoon. It is the 30<sup>th</sup> of December – wow, the year’s getting away from us. I’m Todd Wilken. Thanks for tuning us in. Continuing our series on Christian vocation, part four today: workers, employers, and supervisors. Pastor Peter Bender is our guest. He’s pastor of Peace Lutheran Church and Director of the Concordia Catechetical Academy in Sussex, Wisconsin.

Peter, welcome back.

**BENDER:** Hi, Todd. Good to be back again.

**WILKEN:** Well, I was glancing at the passages that are going to occupy our conversation for the next hour, and I noticed there was no language of “employee or employer” in the passages themselves. Instead, the language that the Bible uses here is “slaves and masters.” What in the world?

**BENDER:** Unbelievable, isn’t it? It certainly is countercultural and politically incorrect. The passages that Luther cites in these sections of the Table of Duties are Ephesians 6:5-9 and under the “Workers of All Kinds,” it begins, “Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart just as you would obey Christ. Obey them, not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, like men-pleasers, but like slaves of Christ” – there it is again – “doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.” So it occurs a number of times in verses 5-8. Sometimes it’s translated “servant.” I think “servant” tends to have a more positive connotation in the minds of many, and “slave” definitely a

negative one because people think of being coerced against their will to do something, being forced into doing something. But I love that word, “slave,” because it is a word that is so countercultural and is so radical. And that’s how Christians should approach their work. It was a radical kind of work that our Lord engaged in when He said, “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” And He spared nothing. He withheld nothing, but poured Himself out utterly in service to us. And as a slave to God’s love, He laid down His life in death for us. And that radical kind of understanding about work, that we work in this world under an employer, a supervisor, or whatever it is that we do – not for my benefit, but for the benefit of those that I’m called to serve. And this idea of pouring out my life for their good, for their welfare, as Christ worked, poured Himself out like a slave for our welfare. That’s a radical kind of concept.

**WILKEN:** Okay, so you’re saying – what we often hear in this regard is, “Well, it’s not an exact match. Paul and the other apostles talk about slaves and masters, and we can kind of make general application to, since we’re not slaves and masters any longer, to employees and employers.” You’re saying, no, we cannot discard the category of slave and simply substitute a different category. This is something fundamentally being said about Christians in their daily work. The nature of that work is attached to that term of slave and servant.

**BENDER:** Yes, it is, and if we substitute other words, then we immediately bring in qualifiers, contingencies, workers’ rights, all of this kind of thing – which is so very much a part of our world today, and it’s precisely this “I will demand for myself what I need!” that is the cause of so much of problems in American society and culture and government and life. It’s part of the reason why the United States and other European countries are spending themselves into

oblivion and bankrupting their countries because of the demands that workers are making because they have “rights” to these things. In contrast to that, you’ve got Jesus and St. Paul saying, “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” He spared no expense. He emptied Himself completely of all of His divine prerogatives and rights in order to work for our salvation. And work is fundamentally, for us as Christians, done not to make ourselves wealthy or to increase our standing and position in the world, but in service to another, in loving service to another as Christ’s work was in service to us.

**WILKEN:** So we have a fundamentally different way of thinking about what our work – regardless of what the work may be?

**BENDER:** That’s correct. And it’s done even if they don’t appreciate it, if they don’t acknowledge it. Because that’s what Jesus did. How many people appreciated what He did when He died upon the cross? Not too many. And many thought it was absurd. “Well, if you’re going to think this is absurd, I’m not going to do it.” No, He did it anyway. That’s pretty radical.

**WILKEN:** It is, and I’m trying to wrap my mind around this. So what of this concept of slave doesn’t transfer over? Because you’re right – this is a word loaded with negative connotations in our culture today. We can’t help that; that’s part of our history. What doesn’t transfer over? Someone says, “I just heard Peter Bender say, ‘If you work for somebody, you’re their slave.’”

**BENDER:** “That means we’re encouraging employers to whip and beat and brutalize their slave workers.” Well, no, that’s not true. But we have to remember that these passages that are used for workers of all kinds, and also employers and supervisors, are particularly catechesis for Christians

who are going to be very often in settings where they are working for an unbeliever, or they’re working for someone who rejects the Gospel, doesn’t live by faith in the Gospel. Then what? Or employers, on the other hand, who have under their employ not only Christians, but unbelievers. What is their posture and disposition toward them? So when we’re talking about marriage and family within the church, we want to encourage Christians not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers. But in this area of Christian vocation in the Table of Duties, we are inevitably yoked with unbelievers. Then what is our calling in that context? And the worker is simply called to do his absolute best, not because his employer is a great guy or always deserves it or never mistreats him, but to do it out of love for Christ in the service of that undeserving employer. That’s a radical kind of thing.

**WILKEN:** It has its parallel in something we talked about yesterday, which was honoring parents even – and especially when –

**BENDER:** When they fail.

**WILKEN:** Yeah, when they don’t deserve it.

**BENDER:** That’s right. And so why do we do this? We hear so often today that people have to earn our respect. “If they don’t earn my respect, then I’m not going to put out for them.” Todd, that is, again, what I’ve been talking about on this whole series, what it is to live under the Law. Because the Law is always about merit. “I’ll serve that employer that I like, that I agree with. I’ll work extra hard for them.” That’s living under the Law. What we’re called to by faith in the Gospel is to do our absolute best for that employer who is overbearing and harsh. And to understand that our work, when we serve in our place of employment, it is for the benefit of that employer so that he also, in whatever business it happens to be, might be of service to others in the world around him. Now, maybe he doesn’t see his business in that way, but that’s how we understand it as

Christians. People have businesses, Christians have businesses, not fundamentally to make themselves rich, but through their business, to be of service to others in the world around them.

**WILKEN:** Pastor Peter Bender is our guest. It's part four of a five-part series on Christian vocation. Today we're talking about workers, employers, and supervisors. Maybe we should just stick with the old language, with the language of Scripture. We're talking about slaves and masters. We regard ourselves as slaves, even if our employers think of us as mere employees. And we regard them as masters, even if they think of themselves as employers. And it is service wholeheartedly as unto the Lord. We'll talk about the wholehearted nature of that service after this.

**[BREAK]**

**WILKEN:** We're talking about Christian vocation today: workers, employers, and supervisors. Pastor Peter Bender is our guest. He is pastor of Peace Lutheran Church, and he's Director of the Concordia Catechetical Academy in Sussex, Wisconsin. You can find out more about the Concordia Catechetical Academy and the resource that we're using for the basis of our series, called *Lutheran Catechesis*, at [issuesetc.org](http://issuesetc.org). Click "Listen on Demand."

Let's talk about the wholehearted nature of that service, because that's precisely what is delivered to us in this passage from Ephesians that we've been working from when it comes to workers of all kinds. Verse 7: "Serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free." What is the nature of that wholeheartedness?

**BENDER:** When the New Testament and Paul here in Ephesians references the heart, we need to understand that "the

heart" is often used as the seat of faith in the person. It's a reference to what governs them. Is it faith in the Law, faith in human works, faith in human merit? Or is it faith in Christ, faith in the grace of God? So to serve wholeheartedly, it's to work entirely out of your faith in Christ's love for you. So as if you were serving the Lord, is believing in the Lord. "I'm doing this because I believe in Jesus' work for me – that's why I work this way for you." And that always, then, makes what I do as a Christian a work of love that is undeserved, unmerited, but always in service to the neighbor.

**WILKEN:** So we're really talking about something we've been talking about in every one of these vocations: that Christian vocation is, in fact, the place where one lives by faith in the Son of God.

**BENDER:** In the Son of God, and in His grace, His unmerited forgiveness. So the verse prior to this, verse 6, "doing the will of God" – there's "from your heart" again. "Doing them good not because of what you hope to gain from it, but for Christ's sake." And that shapes our entire way of looking at our work – both for the workers themselves and for employers who employ workers – to see our work not in self-centered terms, but in self-giving, selfless terms. And our work becomes, then, whether we're employers or whether we're supervisors or businessmen who own businesses and so forth, it becomes an occasion where we confess our faith in Christ in the way in which we operate as workers or as supervisors. And we had cited earlier on in the series the Sermon on the Mount, "You are the salt of the earth, a city set on a hill. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works." In this way, the Gospel becomes incarnate and fleshed in us as workers and employers and supervisors in the way in which we engage the world. And I think this can become a very powerful witness that Christians can give. "Why do you do this? Why are you so faithful as an

employee? I wouldn't put up with what you have to put up with." And that gives us an opportunity to speak about the hope that is within us. "Why do you treat your employees so well? They don't deserve it." That gives us an occasion to give a reason for the hope that is within us – which, by the way, is 1 Peter 3:15, another one of those verses right in Peter's section on vocation.

**WILKEN:** Is this what's missing? I think pop American Evangelicalism attempts to get at this. It's almost as though they have the form of godliness without any of the substance. They understand how important vocation is with regard to these things, like employers and employees, husbands, wives, parents, children – all of those things. They understand that. But what they deliver is essentially a Christ-less teaching of vocation – a vocation that does not have any Biblical connection to faith in Jesus Christ. It really comes down to just doing right, or doing well, rather than the root of faith from which it all springs.

**BENDER:** Sure, and it's Christ-less and it's rooted in a works-righteous faith. And the fact of the matter is, Todd, that we, when we're living by faith in the Gospel of Christ, it may not mean a happier and more successful life as the world would understand it or as pop American Evangelicalism sometimes understands it. It may mean the suffering of greater loss for living by faith in Christ as workers or as employers or supervisors. And that's something that we have to grapple with. It's not like if we do all of the right things, push all the right buttons and pull all the right strings, as workers and as owners of business – "We will enjoy a happy and successful and productive life and make ourselves prosperous and rich." Well, no, we may actually suffer great loss. But that's okay, because Christ suffered loss for our salvation, for our benefit. And it's most often in the suffering of loss, or when we're enduring those kinds of things that we give

the most powerful witness to Christ and what we believe in as the basis for our hope and salvation and life in this world.

**WILKEN:** Okay, then, let's talk about another element of this that is very important. And this is the one that we will all bristle at, regardless of how happy we are in the workplace. It seems to be saying, the passage that you've been talking about here, Pastor Bender, is that employers, regardless of whether they're good or bad, stand in the place of Christ and of God. Is that true?

**BENDER:** That's true.

**WILKEN:** That's hard to swallow.

**BENDER:** That's hard to swallow. But was God behind Pontius Pilate? Was God at work behind the unbelieving Sanhedrin that delivered Jesus up to the Romans to be crucified? Absolutely. And so what we rest upon is the assertion that when I am who I am called to be and do what I'm called to do as a Christian, and I live by faith in God's love and mercy, even if it's suffering at the hands of a wicked tyrant or an employer, God promises to do me good. God promises to do me good through that. Now, there may be some other things that are sometimes at work in our decisions that we make. I'm certainly not saying that a worker should never quit a job and take another job. But what motivates him is, as a husband, as a father, to do what he does to be of service to his wife and to his family, and to be of service to others. The same thing kind of holds true when it comes to employers and supervisors. The Christian employer is not, on the one hand, to threaten or coerce or abuse his workers. But that same employer also does not need to put up with shoddy workmanship and laziness and recalcitrance among his workers. But if he acts in discipline of them, he acts primarily not out of a spirit of vengeance, but to discipline them because they're hindering him from doing the work

that his business calls for that is to be of service to others.

**WILKEN:** So if you do have one of those Ebenezer Scrooge employers, then Cratchit can go and find another job. He shouldn't be bound by conscience to stay in that situation if he can find other gainful means of employment.

**BENDER:** Yeah, particularly if it is – if he's acting out of love for his family and of help to them, then by all means, he can take another position. But I think – I guess we could say that *A Christmas Carol* and the Ebenezer Scrooge story is not particularly Christian, but there are some Christian elements that come in there, and here's one of them: When Bob Cratchit toasts Ebenezer Scrooge, that is displaying some of what we've been talking about in this section.

**WILKEN:** With only about 30 seconds left here, when we find ourselves in those difficult positions of working for someone or for a company where life is difficult and we don't have a way out – we're stuck there, at least for the time being – is that especially the time when this theme that we've talked about so much already in our series, living by faith in Christ, comes into play?

**BENDER:** Yes. And then we pray. Forgive us all our dishonor and disrespect to our earthly masters. And grant us the grace of your Son, that we might serve our life's work with faithfulness toward you and in love and obedience for those we are called to serve. And the patient enduring of sometimes mistreatment and so forth can be a powerful witness to the Gospel of Christ and the mistreatment that He endured and willingly took and did not run away from for our salvation.

**WILKEN:** Pastor Peter Bender is our guest. This is part four of a five-part series on Christian vocation. We're talking about workers, employers, and supervisors. He's

pastor of Peace Lutheran Church and Director of the Concordia Catechetical Academy in Sussex, Wisconsin.

**[BREAK]**

**WILKEN:** Welcome back. I'm Todd Wilken. This is *Issues, Etc.* Pastor Peter Bender is our guest. Part four of our five-part series on Christian vocation. We're talking about workers, employers, and supervisors.

You said something before the break that kind of stuck with me, and that was in reference to *A Christmas Carol*, where Cratchit – it is a poignant scene. Cratchit comes home to his family, they don't have enough to eat for Christmas, he's barely been let off by his overbearing employer to go home and work, and he's supposed to be in extra early the next day to make up for him letting him off on time. And he toasts him, and he does it in such a way – his wife's reaction, Peter, is interesting. She at first refuses to do it, and then she says, "I'll toast him for your sake, not for his sake." That is a beautiful picture, isn't it, of not only that vocation of employer to employee, but of wife to husband, too.

**BENDER:** Yes, I think so. And I think it's actually one of the more Christian moments in the entire story, because it's where love is extended not because of merit. Scrooge didn't deserve that. But it was extended to him in that toast to his good health and the recognition that, "We might not have very much, but what we do have, God has given us through this miser, Ebenezer Scrooge. So God grant him health."

**WILKEN:** And the wife doesn't have to like the situation or like his employer, but that she's willing to understand that and submit to that.

**BENDER:** Right, and she submits to her husband and to his display of love and compassion toward his employer. One of the phrases we didn't talk about in our

parents passage was, “Bring your children up in the nurture and instruction of the Lord.” That’s one of the ways that the father does it – what an example and what a lesson to his children there, and how he directed their faith away from being governed by works righteousness and merit. “He doesn’t deserve this, let’s put the screws to Ebenezer because he puts the screws to us” and so forth. No, they got a powerful lesson in what it means to live by grace and mercy in the father’s toast.

**WILKEN:** Is this a good place – since we’re talking about jobs, essentially – is this a good place to talk about godly vocations? Not every way someone earns a living is necessarily a godly vocation.

**BENDER:** Yes, well, do you have some examples in mind?

**WILKEN:** Well, people can earn a living – I’ll think of two examples and let you pick up there. Someone could earn a living in the sex trade. They can earn a good living that way, but it’s not a godly vocation. Other things that are illegal – ill-gotten gains; you can’t earn a living in organized crime or as a petty thief or anything else.

**BENDER:** Right.

**WILKEN:** And I imagine we could think of many other that have crossed the line from being godly vocations, but nonetheless, you can employ yourself that way.

**BENDER:** Yeah, absolutely you can. I wanted you to say those things so I didn’t have to actually verbalize them. But here, again, we’re governed by what the Word of God calls us to be and what the Word of God calls us to do. And what the Word of God calls us to be and do in whatever life’s work we’re given never conflicts with His Word. And so some of those trades that you mentioned are clearly a violation of the Word of God, the Ten Commandments, and so forth. Secondly, what we’re called to be

and what we’re called to do is always to be understood in service to our neighbor. Even the husband and the wife that provide for their family, they work so that they can feed their children and put a roof over their heads and so forth. But to do it honorably is to do it according to God’s Word. And that takes us back to some of those passages that we looked at in Genesis, that we’re given dominion over the creation and told to be fruitful and multiply. As God gave life, we give life in the raising of children. As God exercised a benevolent dominion in His creation of the world and ongoing sustaining of it, so we share in that work in our vocations and callings as workers and as employers and supervisors.

**WILKEN:** If the employer asks the Christian employee to do something that they know is wrong, how does that dynamic play out, Pastor Bender?

**BENDER:** When what they’re being asked to do is in clear violation of the Word of God and their faith as Christians, then they have to, with all due respect to the employer, decline to do that. If they’re being asked to do something that’s in violation of the law of the land, that is by definition also in violation of what God would call them to do. And they must, with all due respect, decline to do it.

**WILKEN:** They could lose their job.

**BENDER:** They could lose their job. And they willingly suffer that consequence. That’s part of how they’re actually serving their employer correctly.

**WILKEN:** Someone listening to us doubtless will say – and there are many, more than a long time in our country, Pastor Bender, people who are without jobs or regular employment. What does this have to say to them, if anything?

**BENDER:** There is more to employment than simply earning a paycheck. That’s the first thing. God has given us work to do,

which is to say, God has given us love to give. So the Christian who finds him or herself out of work because of a downturn in the economy or so forth still has been given a faith and salvation in Christ, and therefore the call to live in love exists there. And so I would encourage the worker on the one hand to pray that God would give them suitable employment by which they could continue to care for their family, and in the meantime to engage in work that's of benefit to someone. I've heard people talk about, "I was out of work, so rather than sit at home on the couch or just simply scour the papers constantly for employment, I was given the opportunity to do some long-overdue work around the house or at the church" and so forth. This is also where, I think, unfortunately, Western society and culture has taken charity away from the Church and the Church has willingly let that happen and abdicated it so that the care for the poor or the care for the unemployed and the care for the downtrodden, which used to be so much a part of the Church's organized efforts for her own within the congregation and then those that they were very closely connected with in their community, has been taken over by government agencies and so forth. And that's unfortunate. I'd like to see, as President Matthew Harrison has advocated, this recapturing of the Church's work of mercy for those who are downtrodden, out of work, and so forth.

**WILKEN:** Would that apply equally as well, in some senses, to people who have retired?

**BENDER:** Oh, I think so. We've all heard stories about people who work for the sole benefit that they can retire, and maybe retire early, put their feet up and enjoy life, and then they die within a month or two of having retired or within the first couple of years. And whether we are still in the active workforce and not part of what is called "retired" and drawing a pension or Social Security or something like that – as long as

we are in this world, the Christian faith is active in love for the benefit of another. And that's actually what it is to be human, and it is very much what it is to be Christian. And so there will never be a time in which we don't have work we're called to do, even though we may not be drawing a paycheck for it. Going to the nursing home and giving of oneself to a relative or a member of the congregation that is sick and elderly and infirm is part of the charity and work of love that our faith in Christ's mercy calls us to.

**WILKEN:** Real quickly, with only about a minute, it strikes me that maybe even those who are pre-employed, that would be those who are still in high school, grade school, college, they don't actually have "the job" yet, and yet it is in some sense, isn't it, Pastor Bender, their job to be a student?

**BENDER:** Yes, absolutely. We all have work to do, and I think that parents ought to have this understanding with their children from the littlest ages on up – whether it's chores around the house that they're called to engage in by their parents, or when they go to school, being a student and giving their very best. Not, again, simply that "One day, you'll be able to make yourself rich," but you do your very best so that the talents that God has given you, you are able to have developed to be of greater service to your neighbor. So work is not to be defined simply as that for which we get a paycheck.

**WILKEN:** Pastor Peter Bender is our guest. We're talking about Christian vocation. Today: employers and supervisors – we'll talk about supervisors on the other side of the break.

**[BREAK]**

**WILKEN:** Welcome back to *Issues, Etc.* Pastor Peter Bender is our guest. We're talking about the vocation of workers and their employers. I'm Todd Wilken.



Let's turn to the subject of the employer, or the master, as Scripture would refer to them. The principle here seems to be "Every master has a master." Take us there, if you would.

**BENDER:** Every master has a master, and our master as Christians is Christ. He's a master of mercy. He's a master of compassion. He's a master that gave everything that He had for our salvation to redeem us, to give us life. That fundamentally shapes our office as masters with our slaves, or workers. The passage that the Table of Duties cites is verse 9 of Ephesians 6: "Masters, treat your slaves in the same way." In the same way? Well, as mercy and the love of God in Christ has shaped the way in which the slaves, or the workers, conduct themselves in the workplace, so also in the same way it's the mercy and grace of Christ, our master, that governs us as masters or employers and supervisors of workers.

**WILKEN:** Now, does this mean – I think what often happens here is the employer views himself as kind of the "guardian of the company," when it comes to how he relates with his employees, however many there may be. So he sees himself as the representative of that institution. Sounds like you're saying, "No, this still is at the level of serving the neighbor, not serving the interests of the company."

**BENDER:** Yeah, that's right. So the Christian employer or owner of a business would speak like this: "I give thanks to God that He has so blessed me with this business that is large and prosperous, and perhaps it's a multibillion dollar industry, because through this blessing, I am enabled to employ hundreds and hundreds of workers and give them a livelihood so they can provide for their families and be of service to others." That's a uniquely Christian point of view, and what really disturbs me of late in the public discourse in

our country is this kind of class warfare that keeps going on, where the workers are always the good guys and the employers of businesses are always the bad guys. And the workers, as the good guys, always have the rights to demand whatever they want to demand from their employers, and then their employers are the bad guys, because they're always hoarding and are never going to give their fair share to either the form of taxes or to their workers and their benefits and so forth. And that really is an anti-Christian kind of viewpoint. Instead of workers serving themselves and employers serving themselves and their business, each is yoked together in the Christian understanding, for the benefit of the other. "I'm a good employee, I want my employer's business to succeed so that he can provide for others." And the employer sees his business as a great opportunity to employ many and help them and be of service to their families and to the community around them.

**WILKEN:** It seems, at least in this respect, Pastor Bender, that many unbelieving employers actually – maybe they've stumbled into this as simply good business practice – actually, if they don't know better with regard to this relationship, in fact do better. They seem to have a better grasp of how it is one relates to their employers or their employees, in a way that is mutually beneficial to serving the neighbor, than a lot of Christians.

**BENDER:** Sure, well, Jesus says that the sons of this world are often more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light. They're often quicker to realize the benefits of mercy and compassion in the way in which they conduct their business. So Jesus commends that shrewd servant for acting the way in which he did. And I think this is, in part, a reflection of the fact that we – even though there's the problem of sin that has tarnished the image of God in which we are made – we are still made in the image

of God, and there is such a thing as a natural law of love that is known to humanity. People know intuitively that selfless, sacrificial love is a greater virtue than the love of self-centeredness and selfishness. Someone who runs across the street and pushes someone out of the way of a truck that's about to run them over – what a selfless act. Everybody, even unbelievers, recognize the virtue of that act and that it's far greater than just watching the truck go by and paste the guy because you were unwilling to lay your life on the line for him. So unbelievers can sometimes stumble into great truths, truths that ultimately are anchored in the Christian faith.

**WILKEN:** Does it mean that the Christian master is required to overlook malfeasance, incompetence, laziness, sloth – any of those things among his employees?

**BENDER:** It doesn't mean that. Faith in God's grace and forgiveness, on the one hand, does not mean the tolerating of sin and malfeasance and neglected duties on the other. And the Christian employer/supervisor has a responsibility, not to act out of vengeance against employees that are malfeasant or lazy or derelict in their duties, but it is a responsibility to exercise discipline over them. In some cases it's for the benefit of the rest of the employees who are pulling their weight. Sometimes it's because it's harming the business and making it difficult for him to be of service to others. If you can imagine some of the service industries – if you've got employees that are rude and obnoxious to people that are coming in to do business and to receive services, the employer has a responsibility because his work is to provide some service to those people that are coming into his business, to perhaps fire the person or discipline the worker for that kind of mistreatment. But he's doing so, again, as part of his act of

love and responsibility in what God has given him to do for others.

**WILKEN:** Peter, we're going to wrap up our series with you on Monday, talking with you about Christian vocation and youth, widows, "everyone else" – kind of a catch-all. What's in store next time?

**BENDER:** Well, I think it's – in those categories, youth, widows, you've got both ends of the demographic spectrum with youth and widows. It could be thought of as kind of a catchall, whatever the leftovers are. But the very last section that Luther has in the Table of Duties still becomes the exclamation point for all of these offices and, namely, that the commandments are summed up in this one rule: Love your neighbor as yourself. And that love of the neighbor as oneself, or in place of oneself, is ultimately seen in Jesus' sacrifice of love. That's why youth submit to their elders, and it's why the widow depends upon the grace of God in her station and lot in life.

**WILKEN:** Pastor Peter Bender is pastor of Peace Lutheran Church and Director of the Concordia Catechetical Academy in Sussex, Wisconsin. Peter, thank you very much. Talk with you Monday.

**BENDER:** We'll talk to you in the New Year.

**WILKEN:** This is the hardest pill to swallow, I think, among all the vocations that we are given, that even though it looks to us like we do it for the paycheck – and that's how so many of us often think about it, just doing it for the paycheck – that is not the way it is for Christians. Whether we realize it or not, that is not the way it is. The work that we've been given to do in our daily employ is, in fact, service to the neighbor and through the neighbor of Christ. And that will change the way you think about your work. And it is where you live by faith in Christ and by love to the neighbor. Right there, even though it doesn't seem – you may not even be able to see the connection. Well, that's what the

faith part is about: trusting that through this, God has given you this vocation, He is the one who sees to it that the neighbor is served and it's not your responsibility. You simply have the tasks and the duties that God has set before you day by day. You do them in faith in Christ, trusting that He will see to the outcome. And you do it, not seeking the reward that comes every two weeks or at the end of the month in the paycheck – although that is good. You do it seeking the reward that comes only for the sake of Christ. You see, that's why all rewards come to us. Not because we've

earned them. Not because we deserve them. Whether it's the paycheck or the reward that Christ will bestow upon his faithful in the life to come, it is all by grace. None of it is earned. None of it is merited. None of it is deserved. So we serve, serving Christ Himself, trusting in His merits and His merits alone.

I'm Todd Wilken. Talk with you in the New Year – that's Monday. Thanks for listening to *Issues, Etc.*

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