



Joanna Meyer:

You're listening to The Faith & Work Podcast where we explore what it means to serve God, neighbor, and society through our daily work.

Hi and welcome to The Faith & Work Podcast. I'm Joanna Meyer, Denver Institute's director of Public Engagement and it is a delight to welcome you to a new year of the podcast. I cannot wait for you to hear some of the interviews that we have planned for this spring. As we enter 2023, the Denver Institute team's attention turns to one of the anchor points in our programming, Business for the Common Good. Which if you can imagine returns for its seventh year, Friday, March 3rd at the Grand Hyatt in downtown Denver and online worldwide. Business for the common good serves a number of purposes, it gathers challenges and encourages top business leaders from around the country to consider how God could work through them to have a godly influence in both their workplaces and their communities. But it also intrigues, and inspires, and that's one of the things that I love about the event.

It really sparks our imaginations and invites us to see the Christian faith expressed in new and impactful ways, which is why I'm excited by today's speaker, Joann Flett, the executive director of The Center for Faithful Business at Seattle Pacific University. Joann opened last year's gathering with her message Priests in the Marketplace. And today, you have a chance to hear that message, it's based in 1 Peter 2. And Joann will expand on the concept that our identity as followers of Christ is that we're a priesthood of believers. She'll offer specific applications for those whose work is in the business sector. So, without further ado, I invite you to join us in listening to Joann Flett share her message Priests in the Marketplace.

JoAnn Flett:

Hello, Denver. Good morning. I love the idea that I'm getting to think theologically. I love these pieces of the work we do together, Priests in the Marketplace. If you know me, you know that the background of this slide that we have here is a painting by one of my favorite artists, John August Swanson. And John August Swanson has done a number of things. And if you think this isn't the talk, but this is a moment here where when the disciples were brought out into the lake as they were beginning their work, the Priests in the Marketplace were already on that boat. They were a fishermen and they were going to be transformed.

Today, I want to share with you a little bit about what it means to be priests in the marketplace. I'm privileged to serve at Seattle Pacific University and The Center for Faithful Business where we at The Center for Faithful Business like to think a little bit about how we awaken prophetic imagination and moral courage and business. And we are delighted to be with our friends here at Denver who have welcomed us and created a space for us to belong. So, I'd like to take a passage from 1 Peter 2:9 where it



says, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."

So, here is a brilliant piece from Peter, 1 Peter 2, I've long been taken with this idea of what's in Peter and the priesthood of all believers. When I was a person out in Bible college, I really wanted to engage this idea that as you go into the marketplace, that we are to embody priests, be priests. Here's another take of another look at 1 Peter 2:9 in a different translation, "But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instrument to do His work and speak out for Him to tell others of the night and day difference made for you from nothing to something from rejected to accepted." This idea of being a Priest in the marketplace is filled with a lot of conversation in reformation circles. This idea of, "I am a believer, but I work in business, and I have my way, and my being."

How do we show up as priests in the marketplace? This is an odd moment to think about that given everything that Jeff has just shared with us where we have a decline in our churches where younger folks are not returning and we are going to work as a lot of our lives are spent in our workplaces and in our workforces. The priestly attributes that we are looking for here, priests are chosen for the high calling of a priestly work, you're a holy people. And that holiness just to be clear, is not a holiness that requires you to withdraw, but it is an invitation to engage the world and the culture, that holiness is to be a representative of the person of God who is holy, be holy as I am holy.

So, you're chosen to be holy, we're chosen to be God's special possession, we're chosen to declare God's praises. And the idea here is that, there is a cornerstone, this cornerstone that exists in the passage and the last verse of 2 Peter 2:4, "As you come to God, the living stone rejected by humans, but chosen by God and precious to Him, you are also living stones and being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

Those spiritual sacrifices are coming from our very lives. Note that the cornerstone is not just a place of honor, but a structural change for a new thing that God is doing in the world and is wanting to do through you God's representatives. You are to be priests of creation and mediators of order in the places in which you live and work. That was a new idea for me as a 17-year-old in Bible college where I wanted to be training for the mission field, but deeply wanted to be involved in business. My husband and I, as we got into this relationship, folks would say to Him before he married me, "Don't marry her. She just wants to be rich because they associated business with being rich." And the idea was no actually, supported missionaries, and God bless them are awesome, but I wanted to go, and to live, and to have my being in the places that we were going to minister, to rub shoulders with the folks that we were going to belong to so that they could see our Christian lives so that we could mediate God's work in that place.

We are chosen to be priests in the marketplace. This is no happenstance. Priests in the Marketplace, when you think of the marketplace, we're chosen as a high calling God's holy people. And so, this idea



that when we think about business, just as Jeff was sharing earlier, we think of creating wealth, and profit, and profitability, and sometimes that's a stumbling block to folks. I like to say business profit is a reward for business done well. Profit is a reward for business done well. If you're profitable, you're doing something right for your consumers and your places. Now, we take an issue with a bent on profit maximization, but that's a whole other class. We'll stay away from that today. The sacred-secular divide that has existed in our churches and in our businesses allow us to think in ways that say business is secular, and the church is sacred.

So, we have suspicions about business on the one hand in the church and then when we walk into the boardroom, they have suspicions about us as people of faith. Can we bridge that divide? How can we bridge that divide? When I was in seminary at Fuller, one of my professors asked me to define ministry. We'd gone to Fuller for all the cool people, to the Lewis Smedes, and Mirsolav Volf, and all of these folks. And here was Julie Gorman. No one ever heard of Julie Gorman, but she was teaching *Liberating the Laity* and she said to us, "Define ministry. You're all here working to go into ministry. Define ministry." On that, out of that class came this decision for ministry. Ministry is anything I do, you do, to draw people into relationship with God. Anything I do or you do to draw people into relationship with God, that is ministry, at least in my definition of it. And that began the first knock in how I started to begin to break this divide.

Jeff Hoffmeyer:

Hi, I'm Jeff Hoffmeyer, vice president of Advancement here at Denver Institute for Faith & Work. And I'd like to invite you to become a part of our new monthly partner community. Whether it's a monthly commitment of \$25, \$50, or any amount, your generosity will support Denver Institute's ongoing efforts to help men and women love God, their neighbors and society through their daily work, including this podcast. To say thank you as a monthly partner, you'll receive a welcome box, you'll have exclusive access to private digital content, personalized vocational coaching, and discounts for Denver Institute content and experiences. To become a monthly partner, simply visit [denverinstitute.org/give](https://denverinstitute.org/give) or see the show notes in today's episode. Thank you in advance for your generosity.

JoAnn Flett:

God is relational. God's presence is relational. God is a trinity of beings. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Theologians refer to this as Perichoresis, the mutual indwelling of all three persons of the Trinity, deeply relational. In Genesis 3, when God says, "Let us..." The pronoun is us. "Let us make humans in our image." It's a relational image. That is what we're being created into. So, as priests in the marketplace, we are to mediate that relationality. God in God's self is relational. And guess what? Human beings are relational because we're created in the image of God. Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature so that they can be responsible for their neighbors themselves, ushering the kingdom. Business is also inherently relational. Think about how many times in a day, if you've been in



business, if you've been around business, there are team meetings, and group meetings, and your suppliers, and your customers, and your employees. All of these represent a gamut of relationships that you are to be responsible for stewarding, that you show up as being priestly too.

So, God is relational, human beings are relational, and business is relational. That is not by happenstance. Relationships matter. They matter because God has invited us to be in a relationship with Him and thus we can be in a relationship with others. When we think of the myriad of relationships in the stakeholder theory of capitalism, how many people are represented just in this slide and we haven't even included the employee's families or the customer's families or the owner's families. There are just relationships everywhere. So, we are to mediate God's presence in the marketplace by declaring God's praises. Crouched in the next verse, Peter admonishes folks to live godly lives that though they accuse you of wrongdoing, they may see your good works and glorify God. There is an idea from a philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff that I quite like, and this is the idea of marketplace priests work for shalom.

Wolterstorff has this idea of shalom and he says, "Shalom is the state of flourishing in all dimensions of one's existence, in one's relationship to God, in one's relationship to fellow humans, to nature, and to oneself." So, if God is relational, and human beings are relational, and business is relational, what was broken in the garden is shalom? These relationships were all broken. And in the medium of business it is a major tool for God to use to be restoring shalom in the world, bringing rightness of relationships in all of these faces. I am just hopelessly reformed, so you'll have to forgive me for this. "There is not one square inch," Abraham Kuyper. "There is not one square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign, does not cry, mine." Friends in the church, that includes business. Friends in business that includes the church.

We are to be in each other's space and to mediate that presence. So, how do we mediate that presence? We mediate that presence in the ways in which God himself has shown us. We mediate that presence by loving justice, by loving mercy, and by walking in humility. You might very well say that at seminary, what I learned to do about the mediation was to be the privilege it is to be a priest in the marketplace. So, while at undergrad, it was suspicious of me wanting to go into business. By the time I came to graduate school at Fuller, it was okay to understand that because of the myriad of relationships that we were facing in business that we can in fact have an impact, a really significant impact for the kingdom. And this is seen all through scripture.

The Good Samaritan is a business person on his way to another place and he pauses to demonstrate love of neighbor. Joseph of Arimathea make no mistake, the body of Jesus does not come down off that cross without that powerful business leader knowing Pilate and going directly to him and taking him off that cross so that all righteousness could be fulfilled. None of the disciples could have done that, but Joseph of Arimathea who's called the secret disciple could do it. Friends and business who have power, you can use it for building the kingdom. God desires that very thing.



I want us to think of this word I heard from a friend, Amy Sherman, who heard from another friend, I'm not sure who she heard it from, but envision your calling in business as we invite you to think about your role in the places in which you work as business tree. Not ministry, but business tree. This idea that at the micro-level, you are business people and you're mediating God's presence to your coworkers. At the mezzo-level, the business organization that you represent, that organization mediates the presence of God in the world to suppliers and customers. How amazing would that be? And at the macro-level, that the testament of your business in work mediates God's presence for shalom, restoring right relationships to customers, employees, the environment. That's a heavy call for business. So, why do we even call out for business? The slide doesn't quite show all of the details there, but I wanted to show you the slide. In 2013, Michael Porter, who's a management guru out of Harvard, put this very slide up that caught my imagination.

This is 2013. So, these numbers are way, way more now. But in it, he demonstrated that government revenue by sector, the government has 3.1 trillion. Nonprofits, another 1.2 trillion. The bigger part of that pie chart that represents, that is business. At the time, \$20.1 trillion in terms of revenue. That revenue could be used to build, restore, transform our world, but we need Christian people in the marketplace leading that vision of business in the world. Business as a force for good is a moral category. It's not just a B Corp logo, it's a moral category, inviting us to live into our priestly calling, inviting us to know who we are and whose we are.

I'm privileged to serve at SPU. And one of the things I wanted to share about being a priest and how you are a priest to your neighbors is that the priesthood of all believers also represents that you are showing up as a priest, but that your coworkers are also showing up as a priest to you. In his book, *The New Reformation*, Greg Ogden says, "Walton Alston." "The priesthood of all believers, therefore is not only a means for each person to be his or her priests in the marketplace or thereby, but in very personal terms." It means, the minister is your priest and you are the minister's priests, and that you are my priest and I am your priest, and that we are God's representatives to each other and that we are each other's representatives to God. It means, that we are to speak to each other about God, calling each other to faith.

It means, we are to speak to God about each other. Interceding, sounds priestly, doesn't it? Interceding before God for each other, and seeking guidance, and blessing. It means, that we should try to become increasingly responsive to one another, tending to each other in God's name and offering each other practical and constructive help for Christ's sake. This was the piece that was new to me as I prepped and thought about being a priest in the marketplace. We show up as priests in the marketplace, but our coworkers show up as our priests as well, mediating God's presence to us. I've already shared that I'm privileged to work at Seattle Pacific University. Some of our friends are watching online. And this has been the best thing about making the transition to SPU. I have been ministered to by my dean, my coworkers, the people who run the center with me.



They have been priestly to me in as much as they have walked alongside and created space for me and my work and my gifts, and we've joined together in building the kingdom. They've been priestly to me. And as Henry Nouwen and With Open Hands says, "Prayer is never an antisocial or a social activity." Whenever we pray and leave out our neighbors, our prayer he says, is not real. True prayer by its nature is socially significant and there is some reason to wonder whether the comment, "I'll pray for you," is a sign of genuine concern. When we say, "I'll pray for you," it's a sign of genuine concern.

Friends, we have to be back in our places of work. But the exciting thing is that we can offer to pray for our co-workers who are believers. We can be priests to them and we ought to look for how they're being priestly to us. The 1 Peter passage is this. "It's set upon an identity engagement of holiness, not a withdrawal. We are not holy to be withdrawn. We are holy to engage the culture and to be holy as God is holy." I see my time is up. I will end with one more closing thought. Dear friends, I urge you to live Godly lives among unbelievers, that though they accuse you of wrongdoing, they may see your good deeds and glorify God. Preach the gospel, friends. Use words if you have to. Let us pray.

Joanna Meyer:

If you're intrigued by the concepts Joann shared, I invite you to join us at Business for the Common Good, Friday, March 3rd. You can check out the themes of this year's events, see the speaker line up, and purchase your tickets at [businessforthecommongood.com](http://businessforthecommongood.com). Additionally, in today's show notes, we will link to a free course in The Faith & Work Classroom called Business on Purpose. It explores a biblical vision for work and also is produced in partnership with Seattle Pacific Faith & Co. Videos series. Thanks for joining us on today's episode of the podcast and I look forward to being with you again in two weeks.

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