



REFLECTIONS

May 29, 2016

**Do you see a man skilled in his work?
He will serve before kings;
he will not serve before obscure men.**

Proverbs 22:29

Passion for Life

Only through his prolific writings have I met a man named Wendell Berry. The warmth of his fiction and the rhythm in his poetry reveal the passion in his heart for God, the land, and all mankind. What little I know of him still brings me to pause and wonder how a Kentucky farmer finds the time and desire to convey his insights so beautifully. It makes me wonder if he is a farmer who likes to write; or a writer who likes to farm? And I wonder what inspired his vocation to share his passion for life with the world?

Vocation is a calling. I like to think of it as what one does or can do to bring great joy to the lives around them and to their own. I have called it joy. Frederick Buechner calls it gladness. He also observes that we often close our ears to it and opt for something for which we are less gifted and that offers less satisfaction. Sometimes vocation blends with the way one makes a living; other times one's occupation provides the platform for it, or a financial resource to support it. But either way, vocation is one's calling in life.

Still, as Buechner suggests, we so often choose not to hear it. Wendell Berry may have had wisdom enough to pursue an occupation that blended with his calling. Others, like Moses and Paul, required awakenings. Moses first revealed his passion for his heritage when he killed an abuser of a Hebrew man. Then living as a refugee, he must have felt a meaningful life had passed him by. Tending sheep offered a safe place to hide but it also found him alone with God. And it was in that solitude that a burning bush awakened him to God's call. The rest is history. From that fiery bush God called upon Moses' passion for his people. He led the Israelites from slavery into the Promised Land.

As a Pharisee soldier, Paul sought to serve God by zealously protecting the law. Then one day along the road to Damascus a blinding light dropped him to his knees. His eyes fell upon darkness for a time, but his ears opened. *"This is Jesus speaking. Why do you persecute me? Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what to do."* A few years of catch up redirected Paul's path back to his passion to serve God and, to his dismay, discover one day that, *"I was appointed a herald and an apostle — I am telling the truth, I am not lying — and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles."* (1 Timothy 2:7)

All too often we ignore our passion and talent in favor of roads leading toward other desires. But pathways without passion and talent seldom lead to God's intended destination for our lives. Your vocation is where your passion for life will be.

Go for it!

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

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