

WD September 6, 2021

Pastor Matt Woods

“The Blessings of Work”

Today is Labor Day. It is a day that celebrates the American worker and unofficially marks the end of summer. For our text today I thought we would look at Colossians 3:22-25 which Paul shares as part of a chapter on what is expected of a Christian.

²² Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. ²⁵ Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

“Slave” may seem like a strong word but Paul is talking to anyone who is in the service of another for the sake of making a living. That’s pretty much all of us. In Rome slaves were the working-class folks. Now, rather than go into all the nuances of this I would ask that we focus on Paul’s point—Whoever you are working for work for them as to the Lord. “Whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart, as working to the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

Work has been a part of creation from the beginning and did not come only as part of the fall to sin. Genesis 2:15 is very clear, “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.” This is all part of what God called very good. A good day’s work is part of what is good. It was never God’s intention for a person to be lazy or to be incapable of work. In fact, a refusal to work is something scripture definitely defines as sinful. Proverbs 21:25 for example, says, “The craving of a sluggard will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.” There is a stubbornness in his laziness. We may remember the thirty something son who had to be evicted in court by his parents because he wouldn’t leave their basement and get a job.

Perhaps at this point would be a good opportunity for a quick warning. We can all think of at least one person who simply cannot find the motivation to go to get a job, keep that job, and support himself and a family. In our current environment we who work may not be real happy with capable people getting unemployment when so many jobs are available. And I have to admit I have no tolerance for laziness. However, I am learning that instead of getting hung up on what is fair or unfair; instead of letting such people get into my head I choose to count my blessings instead of falling into a comparison trap. The Lord calls me to work as though I am working for Him. Yes, Jesus calls me to compassion for others but even he only fed the 5000 only one time because this was a crowd capable of getting their own bread. It is different when genuine disability prevents one from working. However, if my own brother who has autism can work then so can many others who choose to sit at home knowing they could be working. We should not let a lazy mindset of someone else interrupt a strong work ethic within ourselves.

A good day’s work is a reward. I can remember working in my high school years at Pizza Hut. I would go in on Friday Nights making six bucks an hour, which for me seemed like a lot at the time. We would often get busy. I loved it when it was busy. It not only made the night go fast but it was a lot of fun challenging myself to keep up—making the pizzas as fast as we could. There was a satisfaction, a sense of pride in the hard work. And what I noticed most were the nights that everyone fell into rhythm from the dining room to the prep table. It was fun to see everyone relying on one another making it all work. My fellow workers would inspire me and I them. I see this same effect in volunteering on Turkey Supper, VBS, or when just trying to get some things done around the house. There is a natural fellowship, a common ground, that happens when we work with others.

When you work you may come home tired. You may come home rehearsing all that you did that day and what you may have for tomorrow. You may even come home disappointed like the disciples who fished all night but caught nothing (Luke 5). In any case the hard work itself makes for a stronger mind and body. You have the benefit of realizing your potential and applying your skills to goal. One of my favorite things when I am working on a project at home is to look back and see all that has been accomplished. It is a momentum builder—It makes me ready and eager for the next thing.

Working helps me learn and better myself. The first time I changed my brakes on the car I second guessed myself a lot. Now it takes me about an hour without hesitation. I may learn a new skill. I may learn to be more confident. I may be more open to getting out of my comfort zone. The first time I preached a sermon it took forever to prepare and was very nerve racking. Now preparing a message and then sharing the message is one of my favorite things to do.

Hard work is a way of blessing our families. I always told my boys that everyone is hiring good workers—those that show up on time, work while clocked in, and perhaps even go the extra mile. A hard worker should get a fair wage as well. But to be able to bless you families is an essential characteristic of a Christian man. 1 Timothy 5:8 is very clear: “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” Conversely the opposite is also true. A man provides for his family, especially his own wife and children, he has honored the faith and demonstrate himself as a strong believer in Christ.

Hard work is a way of blessing the Lord. The verse itself gives us the biggest blessing for work. Work like you are a rich man who has everything he needs already. ²³ Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴ since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” As Christians we are already rich with an eternal inheritance. In this we are not working for Jesus to earn our eternal life but because we already have it. Our work is a service to Christ above all else. It is a way of honoring the Lord. It is also a witness. Regardless of our standing in life or how mundane the work may seem, when done in the Lord work of any kind is blessing to someone else as well as ourselves. Changing a diaper blesses the child while serving the Lord. Developing medication for cancer blesses patients while serving the Lord. We are Christlike when we quietly and faithfully show up and do our job, whatever our station in life. Through faith we dedicate our work as though serving our Lord and at the same time allowing our work to witness for Jesus. This is always our goal and our reward. This blesses the Lord.

So, count your blessings this Labor Day and give thanks for your job. Give thanks for every opportunity to witness that your job presents. And bless the name of Jesus. Happy Labor Day.

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with His favor and give you His peace in Jesus. Amen.

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John 3:30