

The Big Idea: All work is God's work and should be done for the same reasons we go to church: to worship and glorify God and serve our fellow man.

Q: Does the hour you spend here on Sunday mornings have any relevance to the other 100-plus waking hours of your week?

For so many, Christianity has become a leisure time activity – God never intended that. Sadly, many Christians don't see the connection between Sunday worship and Monday work. In fact, some Christians agree with non-Christians who believe that faith and work don't mix.

Most of the heroes of the Bible are workplace followers of God, not religious professionals. Just think about it: In the opening chapters of Genesis, we see God both at work himself and also putting Adam to work.

Then there's Jesus. He spent ninety percent of his life growing up and working in a small business, compared to only three and a half years in his ministry. Even after he laid aside his hammer and chisel, 45 of the 52 parables he told take place in a workplace setting. This makes sense because he lived in a Jewish culture which believed in a God who worked and saw every kind of work that mankind did as an extension of his work.

In Colossians 3 and 4, Paul paints a sharp contrast to work habits and priorities we've learned from the world. In Colossae and other cities of the ancient world, the bulk of business was transacted in households – family businesses!, usually by masters and their slaves, and it is in this context that Paul addresses the workplace of his day.

In the passage from Corinthians 3 & 4 that we read, Paul explains three ways our faith should influence our work. It should give us:

- A new perspective,
- A new power source (prayer), and
- A new career objective (going through opened doors)

This morning, I'm only going to look at what the new perspective might be, and perhaps we can follow this up with sermons on power and career objectives.

Here's a question:

To what degree have you ever wondered if what you're doing with your life is really worthwhile? [Repeat]

Have you wanted to do something significant for God—to make your life really count for Christ? A neighbor of mine once said this to me. If he could change jobs, then he could really get close to Christ.

Paul might say, *“Don't change jobs; change your perspective.”*

I often tell my students: “Don't follow your passion...” They look predictably confused because it seems we all need to find our Passion and then pursue it with vigor! But I counsel them to “let your passion follow you” – wherever you are, put your whole self into it because **success and meaning in work is what fuels passion**, not the other way around. And finding success in a work perspective that follows Christ will bring you closer to the right passions.

Let's look at three perspectives: **Service, Worship, & Reward**

1. First is the perspective of **Service**. The world says you must have power, prestige, and *poen* (Dutch slang for 'money'). But God says we go to work not to get others to serve us, but to serve them. Not to gain power but to empower. And that goes for everyone, no matter where you find yourself: lawyer, suit salesman, pilot, engineer, teacher, chaplain – whatever. According to Paul, whether we are giving orders or taking orders, we are to seek the welfare and success of others. Whether I am an employee or an employer, Paul says I go to work not primarily for myself, but for others.

This can be seen in a concept called: Servant Leadership – a bit of a management craze today that is firmly rooted in Christian fundamentals – but no one knows it. People think they can get this Servant Leadership attitude by tricking themselves into thinking it is a good idea to be nice to people and be unselfish... right up until someone actually treats them like a servant or a slave. It then tends to fall apart, because Christ is the model for Servant Leadership and the fundamental service to Him is missing. Servant Leadership misses the actionable Christian virtue of Love; Love of Christ is an end in itself, not unselfishness or servanthood – as admirable as they may be.

2. Second, we are to do our work from a perspective of **Worship**. The world says you must have prestige – status. You have to make a name for yourself. But note the contrast: God says we go to work not to make a name for ourselves, but to make a name for God. Work is a means of worship—a way we recognize God's blessings. "*It is the*

Lord Christ you are serving,” so we do our work “with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.”

Paul says whatever you do, do it for the Lord [worship]. It is hard to escape the fact that Paul sees all work as potentially meaningful and God-honoring. I mean, he is writing to slaves, some of whom did the most awful kinds of labor that would kill most people today. To them, Paul’s words would have been revolutionary: there is no Spartacus or Barabbas in Paul’s writings.

Paul’s words say: All work is God’s work. If you are meeting legitimate human needs, then you are working for God [Martin Luther]. Work is what we were created to do, and when we do it well as an act of love and worship “*as unto the Lord,*” our work glorifies the God we serve. That, of course, **means that we do quality work, and put our whole heart into it**, because this is what God deserves.

3. The third perspective Paul wants us to have about our work is a perspective toward **Reward**. The world says you must have stuff. It’s all about the money! But note the contrast: God says we go to work not primarily to make a living, but to earn an **eternal reward**. Think about it: Your daily work—as an *ambtenaar*, banker, plumber, doctor—counts for eternity. The passage we read clearly teaches that God will hold us accountable as stewards for what we do in our daily work.

As we all know, profit is a strong motivation and can be dangerous if not pursued in the way God intended. The Bible redirects us to remember the ultimate reward for good labor—to stand before God and hear, ““*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few*

things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'. Matthew 25:23"

C. S. Lewis in "Weight of Glory," suggests that God finds our desire for profit [**reward**] too small, not too large. "We are," as he says, "far too easily pleased" with worldly things, when what we really want is waiting for us before God. "It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires, not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased."

[Review.]

The world says, "You go to work:"

- To get people to serve you
- To make a name for yourself
- To earn a living & \$\$\$

God says, "You go to work:"

- To **serve** others
- To **worship** & glorify Me
- To earn an eternal **reward**

Every one of us will stand before God and give account for what we did with our work weeks. So, what does this mean to us tomorrow morning when we show up at work?

It means that our daily work is significant to God and his Kingdom—whether we're leading a company or leading a church, changing a tire or changing a diaper, making a sales pitch or sharing Christ with a coworker. (It can happen!) To make our life count for God and feel the pleasure of doing the work he has gifted us to do, we don't need to change jobs. We need to change our **perspective**.

What's important here is not so much what we do, but why we do it and for whom we do it.

In essence:

We should all go to work for the same reasons we go to church—to worship God and serve our fellow man.

Go in peace to love and to serve our Lord! (Right?)

In fact, if you go to work for a different reason than that, you are going to work for the wrong reason.

It is at this point that I start to rationalize: “Yes, but...”

- I work for a dysfunctional family business
- They don't *deserve* my best
- I'm in a big, impersonal government agency
- I am the manager of a bunch of knuckleheads (BNG)
- Following this advice, my life would be upside-down

But this is not **Man's** wisdom, it is **God's** wisdom. God's wisdom seems like foolishness; but 1 Corinthians 1:25 says: “*For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.*” Thinking you cannot do these things is probably **correct** – they are much too difficult. You cannot rely on 'human strength'.

I'll tell you what I need to do when confronted with these things: I need to open my day with praise to God dedicating the whole day and all my actions to Him and His will.

Any coach will tell you: “don't try to be that perfect person in one go – one day – one week – even one year.” Day-by-day, set your course with *small* adjustments.

Tomorrow – Monday, I ask anyone going to work: open your Bible to Colossians 3:1 and read **one** verse. Pray over that one verse asking the Holy Spirit for wisdom and strength: then *watch*. [Paul asks to watch for God's answers]

Tuesday – Colossians 3:2 - read one verse. Pray over that one verse and keep praying & *watching*.

The Holy Spirit will use a sincere heart – day-by-day – to work in you so that your work becomes a **service** to others and a **worship** to your God that stores up for you a **reward** in Heaven.

Let us pray:

Father, we may feel locked-in in our relationships and how we do our work. How can we “do better”? But you are the God that can provide us with far more than we think or even ask for. It is to you we open our hearts and minds and plead that we work within Your will so we can serve the Image-bearers around us and glorify You in all we do.

In the name of Christ – Amen.