



St. Michael's Church
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2019

ECCLESIASTES 2:17-23
MATTHEW 11:25-30

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE

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On this Labor Day..some questions:

- Do you like your job?
- Do you love what you do?

- If retired, **did** you love your job?

- Did you know that God cares about your job?

- Did you know God had a job?

- God was a ditch digger,
 - Creating everything our eyes can see!

- Jesus a carpenter!

Our jobs are so important that in 1887 the celebration of work was made a national holiday!
The very first Labor Day.

Not just a weekend to transition from:

● Seer-Sucker to heavier cotton...

● Linen to Autumn wool...

Labor day is a sacred celebration of work!

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So

Why is it then that 70% of Americans, don't like their jobs?

Heck, even Solomon from that depressing chapter in Ecclesiastes hated his job, a man who had asked for wisdom for goodness sakes!

To be honest we might feel like Solomon from time to time:

Hear again his dislike for work from the Message translation:

Solomon writes:

*I called it quits,
I gave up on anything that could be hoped for on this earth.*

What's the point of working your fingers to the bone if you hand over what you work for, to someone who never lifted a finger for it?

So what do you get from a life of hard labor?

Pain and grief from dawn to dusk.

Never a decent night's rest.

The best you can do with your life is have a good time and get by the best you can.

The way I see it, that's it—divine fate.

Just—spitting into the wind.

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C'mon, admit it we all feel like that from time to time.

Reminds me of the farmer who said the hardest thing about milking cows is that

- **they don't stay milked!**

Solomon, America- where's the love?

Dorothy Sayers has the answer.

Sayers was a colorful woman of the 20th Century, a writer of detective novels.

Daughter of an Anglican Priest and a firm believer in Christ,

in fact in 1943,

the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury offered Sayers a Lambeth Doctorate in Divinity!

Sayers diagnoses the problem:

She writes:

“Our society as a whole, and individuals in it are dying because they do not have the revolutionary old Biblical doctrine of work...

In the Bible is a view of work that is revolutionary.”

Sayers writes this in the early 20th century, but may as well have written it for Solomon and every human since!

To understand what Sayers meant, we have to leave Ecclesiastes and go to Genesis..

Genesis 3 explains why so many hate what they do.

Remember Adam and Eve are told by God:

“Live in peace AND JOY in the Garden of Eden!

Just don't eat of the one tree..or you will die.”

Long story short...the world's first theologian, Satan comes on the scene, first theologian because he is the first to talk about the things of God...

Satan, to Adam and Eve...says:

“Did
God
Really
Say...
You shouldn't eat from any tree in the garden?

C'mon:
Eat it, you won't die.”

Adam and Eve disobey God by eating the apple.

In that act sin comes into the world.

You might be asking well God promises they would die but they didn't...

But the original plan of God was that humans would never physically die.

The original plan was that we would live forever in the Garden of Eden.

Sure enough, Adam and Eve would eventually die.

So, in addition to our physical death, there would be '4' more consequential forms of death:

1. Internal death: The beginning of guilt and shame over what they had done
2. Second: Death in their walk with God, remember God searching for them in the garden? **Adam, where are you?**
3. Third: Death in human relationships... from the apple, Adam and Eve are alienated from each other-as we always say:

a. Adam blames Eve

b. Eve blames the snake

c. the snake has no leg to stand on

d. And a litigious culture is born.

4. 4th and most importantly for this sermon...death in our work....

In Genesis 3:17, as a result of original sin,

- **God promises Adam that:**
 - **his work**
 - **would be difficult**
 - **and toilsome:**
- **"You will work the ground and it will produce only thorns and thistles."**

This explains the 70%.

Unhappiness in our work is directly connected to original sin.

Again, not God's original plan!

We were supposed to love the work of our hands!

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BUT this is **why** we call Jesus Savior..

Saving us from what? These faces of death!

Jesus is the new Adam!

- Satan says to Adam and Eve,
 - **eat of this tree and you will die.**
- Jesus from the tree of crucifixion SAYS:
 - **I came that the dead might have life!**

Jesus died to reverse these faces of death-to undo what Adam did,

including the felt death in our work.

Paul in Corinthians writes: For as in Adam all die, but those who belong to Jesus will be given new life!

Jesus reverses:

1. Our Physical death to Eternal life!
2. Guilt and shame to Peace
3. Alienation from God to reconciliation with Him
4. Death in our relationships with each other to peace with each other
5. Hatred of jobs to deepest contentment!

Jesus is the new Adam!

Meaning Christians should be the most joy-filled employees!

Jesus in John 15 says I chose you to go and bear fruit!

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SO:

For every follower of Jesus,

our jobs have two Biblical purposes:

1. **Live into the call of Jesus, who made our insides for His Kingdom purposes.**

2. To help humanity--

Working is the way we express our love for God and humanity!

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First, work as a response to the call of God in our lives.

God calls some to be:

- Teachers
- Doctors
- Realtors
- Lawyers
- Chefs
- Waiters
- Pilots

JESUS HAS WIRED US IN CERTAIN WAYS TO CARRY OUT HIS PURPOSE ON EARTH.

Which means the work we do should:

- fit our insides
- it should fit how God put us together
- So we live out His Kingdom expanding purpose for our life.

Our work, is our calling, so look inside and do what your heart and mind are calling for!

Do what ignites the fire!

Statistics tell us that 50-80% of Americans are in a job that doesn't match their

- insides,
- their wiring
- and abilities!

Does this help us make sense of the 70%?

Our Labor comes from the call of Christ, Christ who made our insides for His Kingdom expanding purposes.

Now, it doesn't mean that we should all rush off to be foreign missionaries, nuns or monks..

No!

I think of William Wilberforce, oh he felt pressure to be an Anglican Priest,
but decides his insides are a better fit for him to become a lawyer,
so he becomes a Christ Centered lawyer who dedicates himself to ending slavery in England.
It takes him decades, painful work but the good side of pain!

We can be just as faithful as a

- Christ-Centered priest as we can as a
- Christ-Centered realtor
- Waiter
- Teacher
- pilot!

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1. First purpose of our work: Seeing what we do as a response to the wiring of Jesus in here, living out his Kingdom purposes.
2. 2nd purpose-to help humanity.

Working is the way we express our love for God and humanity!

Now:

- You might say but my job is to clean up after the horse and carriages downtown..
 - I say thank God for you!
 - You are helping the city not smell! You are helping all of us...
- You might say Al, I'm an accountant,
 - I say thank God for you!
 - Our city, our companies, families and churches can't run unless we are in sound financial shape....!
- You might say Al, I'm a realtor
 - You bring the joy of home to people!

It's a mind shift to see our work as the way we express our love for God and humanity!

It means erasing the wall between Sunday and Monday. Monday becomes an extension of our Sunday Worship!

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If we forget these two purposes...

- Jobs as calling of Christ
- An expression of love for Him and humanity

We find ourself like Solomon in Ecclesiastes 2.

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Solomon.

He started out so well!

- He asks for and is given profound wisdom,
- He's made king
- He's the envy of the ancient world!

He even writes 3 books!

- Song of Solomon in his young age
- Proverbs in his middle age
- And Ecclesiastes in his old age!

His first two books are masterpieces, but Ecclesiastes yikes, **read it to get depressed!**

His work exhausts him.

Why?

You need to know that by this time in Solomon's life..

Solomon was walking about as far away from God as you could imagine.

- He marries over 700 women
 - Imagine the alimony!

- Most of those 700 women were from pagan religions, which led Solomon into worshipping false gods.

As God became more distant in Solomon's life,
so did Solomon's meaning in his work..

After all, there is a big difference between being a:

- A Wise Man
- And just a wise-guy.

If God is nowhere in our job, we will never have rest in our souls, we therefore get exhausted and rest--less.

I'm not talking about physical restlessness, but restlessness in our souls..

Kind of like keeping a sheepdog in a downtown Charleston apartment. The dog was wired to run and herd sheep in endless pastures!

When he's all hemmed in,

a rest-lessness,

a disillusionment sets in!

Is that where you are?

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This is why Jesus says what He says in Matthew 11.

Come to me,
all who are weary and burdened,

and I will give you rest, rest for your souls

Jesus describing a deepest contentment of the soul.

Deepest peace, deepest quiet....

Asking Jesus to lead us to the work that fits our insides,

That expands his Kingdom

That blesses humanity

Is THE recipe for

- contentment
- Rest
- And peace

in work.

Which might be why Mother Theresa said God doesn't call us to be successful, but faithful!

Faithful to HIS call for our lives!

Without Christ:

It's Ecclesiastes 2:

- Frenetic
- Restless

With Christ,

It's Matthew 11:

- contentment...

The WORK that Jesus did on the cross,

Allows us to find deepest contentment in our WORK.

Because of HIS Work,

We have deepest Contentment in our own.

Our work is our way of saying Thank you Jesus for reversing death and wiring me to be part of the rescue plan of your people.

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But there is one more bit of good news when through the Holy Spirit we live in this contentment:

We bring glory to God.

CS Lewis in his book "**The Weight of Glory**" writes:

"The work of a waiter,

the work of Handel become spiritual on the exact same condition:

That of being offered to the Glory of God!”

I can vacuum my house with a heart of misery and resentment

or I can vacuum my house singing praise songs while giving glory to God.

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The Purpose of work..

1. Live into the call of Jesus, who made our insides for His Kingdom purposes.

1. And an expression of love for God and humanity!

Which means, there is no such thing as retirement....

we live these purposes until our final breath.

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Someone once said the two greatest days of our life are:

1. The day we're born

2. The day we discover: WHY.

So, let me ask you:

Are you more like:

Eric Lidell or Harold Abrams?

2 characters from the movie Chariots of Fire..

Long distance runner Eric Lidell at one point in the movie says:

When I run, I feel His pleasure...

Abrams on the other hand says:

I'm 24 years old and have never known contentment,

as a sprinter I have 10 seconds to justify my entire existence.

Who are you?

o Do you feel his pleasure when you work?

- Or are you working to justify your existence?

Rest

Vs.

Restlessness

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Let me end with a story we often use in the Alpha Course...

The story of a father babysitting his daughter while on a conference call.

To busy his daughter, the father takes a picture of a map of the world out of a magazine-tears it into small pieces and whispers for her to go into the den and put the pieces back together.

The child comes back within 5 minutes and hands dad the completed map.

- The father's jaw drops
- Puts the call on mute
- And says how did you do it that fast?

Well she says:

“On the other side of the map is a picture of Jesus. When I got all of Jesus back where he belonged, the world just came together!”

Jesus reverses the face of death in our work..

To bring:

- Life
- Deepest purpose
- Contentment
- And our soul's rest.

Amen.