

## Work as Worship- Attitude and Ethic, 9/22/19

Last Week, Pastor Todd started our new series Work as Worship, connecting our whole days work with God's glory, character and the gospel in our lives. Last week Todd laid the foundation for our 4-week series. Contrary to what your kids might think, work is not a curse, created before the fall, we are created in the image of God and he works, Gen. 1 and the work he gave us was meant to uniquely bear his image in the world. Todd talked about **Colossians 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.** So all our work, whether blue collar or white collar, whether paid or unpaid, whether in the church or in the world, as a student or in retirement, whether in the back alleys in the city or the backyard...is for the glory of God. Work is a form of worship to our maker. Part of what we want to do with this series is expand our understanding of worship. I don't think we help ourselves when we confine the use of the word worship to singing on Sunday morning. Yes, this is a form of worship, but Scripture says we are to live our whole lives as a form of worship to God. In fact, this gathering each week should prepare you to worship with the other 6 days.

Today we want to build upon this foundational understanding of work as worship. We will look at 2 key texts of Scripture and discover from them **5 Ways to Approach Work as Worship** **1 Corinthians 12:4-7**

*<sup>4</sup> There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. <sup>5</sup> There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. <sup>6</sup> There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. <sup>7</sup> Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

While this text is talking specifically to spiritual gifts in the body of Christ, there are two principles that we can extract from this as it applies to all our work.

**#1 Work according to your Divine Design.** Paul stresses the uniqueness and diversity of the gifts given by the One God. While we were all made in the image of God, we were all also made uniquely so that together, like a tapestry we are woven together as each thread, each person God has made has work to do according to their divine design. This was the reformer, John Calvin's approach. Internal Calling. Look within and see your divine design.

**SHAPE-** Erik Rees uses a helpful acrostic for us to discover this, I recommend his book.

**Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, Experiences-**

God providentially works in your circumstances and experiences- Both good and bad, both the things that were done to us, and the things we have done...that shape our lives. So instead of asking why me? Maybe we should ask, How do you want to use this, Lord?

And you know what your **SHAPE shouts? PURPOSE!** You are not a random accident of blind forces of the universe but an intentional, loved, wondrously made product of the divine master-craftsman. What is your SHAPE by the master-craftsman?

Second principle from this passage.

## **#2 Pursue work that is beneficial.**

1 Corinthians 12:7

*Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.*

This was the reformer Martin Luther's approach- External Calling. Look outside to the world and your community and see the needs and if you are being called to address those needs in the world. If you see the need for community health and wellbeing- you may pursue the medical profession. If you see the need to curb disorder or physical decay you may pursue police work or sanitation. You see the need for higher quality rock music instead of the uncreative, untalented "rock music" that is popular right now- maybe you need to start a band. Or as Jesus put the principle more generally in the sermon on the mount.

Matthew 7:12

*Do unto others as you would have done to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets.*

Pursue work that contributes to the kind of thriving community you would want to live in. Our church, because of the collective and individual beneficial work we do, ought to make Wilmington and our surrounding community a better place to live, work, play and worship. I think forces us to ask the question: Does the work that I do at my company promote health and a thriving community? Does it benefit others? Would Jesus work at this company? All work is not beneficial work that is meeting a need. That might mean working toward a company change.

So Calvin and Luther- internal and external calling are complementary here when we think about our work. *Does it fit my SHAPE and does it benefit others?* I don't think we train our youth enough to think about these questions before other questions as they are considering what to do with their lives. Dorothy Sayers- the British playwright and author and friend of C.S. Lewis and Tolkien wrote an essay that was incredibly thoughtful and theologically profound called "Why Work"

*"The habit of thinking about work as something one does to make money is so ingrained in us that we can scarcely imagine what a revolutionary change it would be to think about it instead in terms of the work done.*

*We should ask of an enterprise, not 'will it pay?' but 'is it good?'; of a man, not 'what does he make?' but 'what is his work worth?'; of goods, not 'Can we induce people to buy them?' but 'are they useful things well made?'; of employment, not 'how much a week?' but 'will it exercise my faculties to the utmost?'"*

This was not the advice my guidance counselor gave me. My guidance counselor showed me a list of the top paying careers. I was headed toward engineering...which for many, like our brother Alan Steinle who was Delaware's engineer of the year this year- is both clearly according to his divine design, and one that is wondrously beneficial. That is a calling. But for me- not only would I have been terrible at it, I would not have enjoyed the work and would have been in for the wrong reasons. And I think that contributes to why about 85% of people

say they hate their jobs. And that leads us to the next text that that addresses primarily our work attitude and ethic, regardless of whether we love what we do or not. We are doing to see three principles from this passage.

Colossians 3:22-25

*<sup>22</sup> 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.*

*<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, <sup>24</sup> since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. <sup>25</sup> Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.*

In this text Paul was being very practical- there were indentured servants and slaves in the 1<sup>st</sup> century social structure. It wasn't the race-based, lifelong slavery that is sadly part of our American history, but it was still not a God-honoring system. Many in this social class would have been in the pews on Sunday morning in Colossae when Paul wrote this letter. Paul's purpose in this text was not to dismantle the social structures of slavery, although that is exactly what the gospel does and did do eventually. No, instead he was being very practical- tomorrow morning, you still have a master and work to do. How will you live within the social structure you find yourself, in a way that glorifies God in the work you have? While we may not be able to relate directly to the master-slave relationship, I believe the implications of what Paul says here about our work is profoundly important and practical.

### **#3 Consider all work as worthy of dignity.**

*v.22 Reverence for the Lord, v.25 [with God] there is no favoritism.*

God sees both managers and employees as absolute equals. All good work, keeping house, working the fields, caring for children is worthy of dignity, even if it is forced labor. This doesn't mean that they shouldn't work for their freedom or that it justifies the institution, but God gives work inherent dignity. Martin Luther- the Milkmaid has as honorable of a calling as the priest. If you work in a job that is not highly rewarded in our society, know that God cares sees it as valuable. But it also means that we don't look down our noses at other people's jobs, who don't get paid as much or you deem unimportant. There is no favoritism with God. And this is an implication of the gospel. If we understand the gospel of Christ's work- He left heaven to live among simple people, take a blue collar job working with his hands, he labored to carry the cross up to Calvary and died unjustly, and that all of us great and small put him there, we are all equal at the cross...then don't you dare think that because you are a highly trained professional that you are better than the doorman...that you should treat him or her like a piece of furniture. Does your theology affect your life?

R.C. Sproul tells a story about observing the system at the hospital one morning. Head doctors, doctors, residents, administrators, nurses, support staff and then the housekeeping...pecking order. Nurse- very attentive with the doctors and looking in the eye, and then a custodial worker came by and looked toward her and she turned her head and didn't say anything and

walked right by. The human heart will always create a cast system unless the gospel bleaches that out of you. See the dignity in all work.

**Colossians 3:22-25**, Paul in these verses reminds the believer who their true master is...**#4 Work for your true master not your earthly master.**

How many of you work in an organization where you have an org. chart? Consider your manager for a moment, or better yet the person 2 people up the chain of command. You care what that person thinks of you. When they enter the floor where you work, everyone sits up just a little straighter, smiles a little harder, or types a little faster. If he or she makes a really positive comment or a really negative comment, that is going to echo at dinner time when you go home isn't it? Do you care that much about pleasing God, your true master? Do you have that kind of fixed attention when it comes to the Word of the Lord in your life? Yes, if you are in Christ, there is no condemnation, so he doesn't eternally punish us. However, he does bring consequences both discipline and reward.

Ultimately, I don't work as your lead pastor for me, or even for you. I do it for Christ, my true master. Do I care what you think? Absolutely, but I care about what God thinks far more than you. After all, he's the only boss that will be around a million years from now. I believe this understanding of God as our true master is a remedy for both anxiety and laziness.

John White, Psychiatrist and author, Christian- wrote about his experience in school. He realized that when he was studying he was under such anxiety to get good grades in order to get to the next level he went into this cycle- procrastinate and cram. He was so exhausted from the last cram, he would just procrastinate and try to escape and avoid... one day he was reading this passage and said, what if I studied not for the marks, but for the Lord. If I studied not for the exam but to be a great counselor. If I did it for Christ. It transformed the way he approached his study. No more procrastination and cramming. He studied to learn and be a good counselor. In the short run, his grades went down a bit, but in the long run he got far better grades because he was rested, happy and not studying for the test but to be a great counselor in the world for Christ. Work for Christ!

**#5 Put your soul into your work.**

***<sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord.***

Literally means, put your soul into it. It is an act of worship, as unto the Lord. We never phone it in. We should be known as Christians not only by our love, but our work ethic. This is why one of our core values is the pursuit of excellence, relevance and innovation. We believe how we do the work of ministry reflects our creator. The grace of God in the heart of a believer, whose motive is the glory of God and who depends on the Spirit produces incredible energy, creativity and industry.

I think in the last 100 years the local church has neglected to help you make the connection between your work and your theology. When we preach about work we often talk about evangelizing and getting paid so you can give to the church. Again, Dorothy Sayers picks up on this.

“In nothing has the Church so lost Her hold on reality as in Her failure to understand and respect the secular vocation. How can anyone remain interested in a religion which seems to have no concern with nine-tenths of his life?”

The Church’s approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to exhorting him not to be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours, and to come to church on Sundays. What the Church *should* be telling him is this: that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables.”

If you sweep streets, make those streets as clean as you can, put your soul into. **Next Slide** If you are an accountant, be as accurate and timely as you are able unto the Lord. If you are a stay-at-home mom, put your heart into raising the next generation of Christian leaders and making the home a place of love and joy and peace. If you are retired or in the twilight of your life, what creative, beneficial work has God given you can put your soul into? I am so thankful for those, many who are retired who give so much of their time and talents and creativity to our church community. Ex: Gordon Schloatman, legend has it that he is in his upper 80’s.

### **5 Ways to Approach Work as Worship**

**#1 Work according to your Divine Design.**

**#2 Pursue work that is beneficial.**

**#3 Consider all work as worthy of dignity.**

**#4 Work for your true master not your earthly master.**

**#5 Put your soul into your work.**

Part of what will help you bring clarity to this in your life his hearing sermons, but we also want to have conversations with those in the secular world about how their faith shapes their work.

**Tuesday, Facebook Live Conversation.** With Sam Waltz

Sam has spent decades in various leadership roles in Delaware, developing relationships everywhere he goes...God has gifted him with a thick relational wallet. A few of his noted accomplishments: Founding Publisher of the Delaware Business Times, Senior Executive of Dupont's Corporate General Counsel and starting his own consulting business. Sam loves to spend his ministry time helping people make wise career choices that match their God given design. Nate and Sam will discuss the role of ethics in the workplace as well as how to best utilize your strengths in your vocation.