



THE JOURNEY CHURCH

SERMON GUIDE 2.6.2022

GENESIS

Working for the LORD

SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 2:5-8, 15

RECAP:

Text: Genesis 2:5-8, 15

Title: Working for the LORD

INTRODUCTION

- Two weeks ago: Pastor Erik talked about man created in God's image. Man is a mirror of God.
- Last week: Distinct from animals/dominion
- Next week: Male and female are distinct (Erik)
- This week: We're continuing our conversation about man's dominion and how man takes dominion—namely, through his work.

I've told you before that prior to coming on staff here at TJC, I pastored in Indiana for ten years. What I may not have told you is that for 7 of those 10 years, I was a bi-vocational pastor, which means in addition to my job pastoring, I worked a second job to supplement my income.

Most of those years I worked for my dad selling and installing mobile electronics, but I spent two years driving a truck for Napa Auto Parts. It was an easy job. I didn't mind doing it. Most of the day, I would either listen to sermons or lectures as I made my deliveries.

I had some interesting customers. One was Roger. He worked the parts desk at Chevy in Indianapolis, and he was not a nice guy. When I would show up to deliver his parts, he acted like I was bothering him. I'd be like, "Roger, you ordered these parts, bro!" He didn't care. He just wanted things his way. I guess this affected my attitude more than I realized. One day, Roger was looking for a part he sent back. So, he called our store asking where it was. When my manager asked who picked the part up, Roger said, "I don't know. I gave it to that kid who looks like he doesn't give a crap." It was funny at the time, and I wasn't in trouble, but it made me think about my performance. Not too long after that, Roger found out I was a pastor, and he couldn't believe it. The next time he saw me, he said, "You're a pastor?!" Obviously, my attitude and the way I treated him wasn't very Christlike.

That was almost ten years ago, and I haven't forgotten it. As I've reflected on that time, I realize now what I was doing. I viewed my job as a pastor as my "real" work for the Lord and my job as a parts driver as just a necessary evil to make money. I saw my vocation as a pastor as sacred and my vocation as a driver as secular. And it showed in my work. At church, I was eager to serve the Lord and do my best. At Napa, I did only what I had to do to get by.

Why? Because I didn't have a biblical view of work. The Bible teaches that work has been created by God for His glory and our good. Man has been created to work and work is how we take dominion in God's world. And no matter what our vocation is, we are to work for the Lord and not merely for men. God's design is that through our work, He will accomplish His creative and redemptive purposes and we can find true fulfillment in what we're called to do.

I think many Christians have that same unbiblical view of work I once did. So, we need to hear from God on this issue. I've outlined three points for you this morning.

1. God created work
2. God cursed work
3. God redeemed work

Point #1-God created work

A lot of Christians view work as a necessary evil, something we only do because we live in a fallen world. The truth is, work was made before the fall. There will be work in

Heaven. The Bible teaches us that God originally created work for His glory and our good.

1A - Work reflects the Creator

God designed the world with the plan and need for man to work. Look at Gen. 2:5 again, **“When no bush of the field was yet in the land and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up—for the Lord God had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.”** The Lord set everything in place for growth, but He wanted the man to cultivate and develop His creation. The land was rich in resources and material, but man was needed for its development. So, then, we read in verse 7, **“then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.”** God makes the man, and what is the man’s purpose? Gen 2:15 says, **“The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”** Adam was made to work. God created the man to cultivate and preserve God’s creation. He’s to work, tend and keep.

In doing so, the man is reflecting His Creator. In Genesis 1, God made the world, but it was formless and void. So, over the next five days, God not only fills out His creation, but He brings order to chaos. The Psalmist describes the universe as **“the works”** of God’s fingers (Psalm 8:3). He makes the world beautiful and glorious. God created. He designed. He fashions and brings order, and the man was made to do the same kind of work just like His Creator.

Christians, this is why your job has significance no matter what you do. Jesus was a carpenter. Paul was a tentmaker. If you build houses, you’re taking the natural resources of the world and making them into a livable space. If you enter data into a computer...like God, you’re bringing order out of chaos. Engineers design roads. Stay at home moms cultivate and nurture God’s creatures. Even if you operate a bulldozer, you’re doing that so something beautiful and orderly can be made in the place of whatever you destroy. Our jobs reflect God when we create, cultivate, nurture and bring order.

I didn’t see this when I delivered car parts. During the week, I worked begrudgingly at my job because I saw no significance in it. All I cared about was making money to supplement my low income as a pastor. I didn’t see that I was helping people made in God’s image by getting mechanics the parts their cars needed. I didn’t realize I was

assisting my fellow man finish his creative work as he installed a radiator or brought beauty to a car with the paint I supplied. I didn't see that I was reflecting my Creator in my job.

I saw my job as a pastor as work that glorified God, but my job as a parts driver as something that didn't honor God at all because I viewed it as meaningless. Christians, there is no such thing as a secular job. Your work is meant to be done for the glory of God and for your joy. God's original design for work is that it be fulfilling and God honoring. Adam and Eve were farmers and builders, and they did their work for the glory of God; as a result, their work was satisfying and joyful.

1B -Work should be fulfilling

No matter what your vocation is, it can be joyful if it is done to the glory of God. This is something the Reformation recovered. The Catholic Church taught that only professional clergy served in jobs that glorified God. All others were considered secular. But the reformers said, no, all work is to be done to the glory of God and for our enjoyment.

Listen to this quote from Martin Luther. *"The Christian shoemaker does his duty not by putting little crosses on the shoes, but by making good shoes, because God is interested in good craftsmanship."* Christian ministry is not the only vocation that glorifies God. Your job at Target isn't God honoring because you listen to Christian music in your earbuds while you stock shelves. Stocking shelves is God honoring when you do it to the best of your ability for His glory, knowing he made you to do this work.

Which means your job should be a source of enjoyment. When Adam and Eve worked in the Garden, they didn't struggle. They weren't frustrated. They enjoyed their work, because it was done in fellowship with their Creator. Ecclesiastes 3:13, ***"everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil—this is God's gift to man."***

1C - Work is God's providential means

It's also honoring to God when you realize He is using your vocation as His own providential means. Luther said, God is milking the cows through the milkmaid. He is making wool coats through the shearer. Christians, God is providing people with jobs and income when you drive a truck and deliver goods. He is feeding children when you stock shelves. He is healing diseases when nurses and doctors care for people. Your job, no matter what it is, is being used by God to care and provide for mankind. When I installed

radios for my dad, I didn't see that my work was a means of God's common grace to provide enjoyable music to people while they drive. The remote starters we sold made people happy because they could warm up their vehicles in the winter. Christian, God is using your work to dispense His provisions and blessings upon the world.

Pastor Erik has been talking to our staff lately about how stand-up comedy can glorify God. A couple comedians he and I really like are Dusty Slay and Nate Bargatze. Both are clean and funny. I wonder if they realize how God is using their abilities. Do they see their work as valuable because God is blessing people with the gift of laughter through their jokes?

My Christian friends, I wonder how God is using your job to bless people. How does God provide for mankind through you? What gifts of common grace is God pouring out through your labor?

Work is a blessing from the Lord. But work is also hard because our sin brought God's curse upon our toil. That's our next point.

Point #2-God cursed work (Gen. 3:17)

The reason God cursed work is because of our sin. Let's go to Genesis 3. Of course, you know the story. Man was forbidden to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, despite God's command, and in response to the serpent's deception, Adam and his wife, Eve, took the fruit and ate.

As a result, God pronounced curses on everyone and everything. First, God cursed the Serpent (3:14-15). Then He cursed the woman (3:16). Finally, God cursed the man. Verse 17,

¹⁷ And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life, ¹⁸ thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Before the curse, the ground broke up easily for Adam. Fruit and vegetables basically grew at his command. Building was easy and enjoyable. Work was fun and fulfilling. But

no more. Now, the ground is cursed. Productivity is slow and sometimes non-existent. Work is hard and frustrating.

Have you worked on a project all day and felt like you got nothing done? Or maybe you came to the end of a hard work week, the boss gives you your check, but all your money is already spoken for. Work is not only hard, but sometimes it can be monotonous, boring, and meaningless. Sometimes our jobs feel like they're all consuming, and they take a toll on our relationships and health. This is all part of the curse. Because of sin, work has been cursed by God.

2A - Work is idolatrous

Sin is also why work can be a source of idolatry for us. It's not wrong to work hard and enjoy what we do. It's also not wrong to find a sense of satisfaction in your job. In fact, God wants all of that for you in your vocation. The problem is when our job becomes an idol. Idolatry is when we worship someone or something besides God. And worship is giving absolute devotion and affection to someone or something. So, when our jobs are our sole focus and primary source of joy and satisfaction, we have made an idol out of them.

And you can usually tell if your job has become an idol.

1. **We neglect our families.** When our jobs are an idol, we tend to neglect what matters most, namely, our families. We work during the day and when we come home. And when we're not working and with our family, we're thinking about work, taking emails, sending texts, and making calls. We're not really present.
2. **We neglect church.** We view rest and worship as barriers and stumbling blocks to progress. Even when we do stop to rest and worship, we're thinking about the work we need to do, and we can't wait to return to the grind.
3. **Our jobs are all about us.** Your job has become an idol if it's all about you. It's all about making more money so you can build your ego and supply closet. You want a promotion because it's how you validate your worth, and when people don't acknowledge what you've done, you're angry.
4. **Your job is your identity.** You don't know who you are apart from your job. When you introduce yourself to people, it's tied to your vocation. If you lost your job, you'd lose your purpose and joy.

Our work can become idolatrous. Our work can also be viewed as meaningless.

2B - Work is meaningless

Of course, no one would say their job is completely meaningless. It does provide a paycheck, after all. But other than that, you don't see any significance in it. Work is drudgery. It's monotonous and boring. You dread Monday, and you can't wait until it's time to clock out. You hate your job. It does nothing but frustrate you. You work for the weekends.

You view your time at church, reading the Bible and in prayer as your Christian duty, but time at work is completely disconnected from your relationship with Christ. You see no connection with fulfilling an order or answering the phone to your walk with Christ.

Sebastian Traeger wrote a book entitled, *The Gospel at Work*. In it, he spoke to this idea of viewing work as meaningless. "When this kind of thinking takes hold in our minds, the results are devastating. Despondency, joylessness, complaining, discontentedness, laziness, passivity, people pleasing, score settling, corner cutting, Monday-dreading gloom — these are the fruits of being idle in our work."

Sin has caused us to make an idol of work or view work as nothing more than a place where we get a paycheck. But for some of us, neither one of those are true. Instead, sin has caused some to be lazy.

2C - Work is absent

The Bible has a lot to say about laziness, and none of it is good.

Proverbs 10:4, ***"A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich."***

Proverbs 21:25, ***The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor.***

Proverbs 20:4, ***"The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing."***

Paul says that a man who refuses to work shouldn't eat and Christians who don't provide for their families have denied the faith and are worse than unbelievers (2nd Thess. 3:10, 1 Tim. 5:8). God condemns laziness because it tells a lie about who He is. He made us to work, not sit at home and be idle.

I realize there are people who have legitimate reasons why they can't work. Their bodies or minds won't do it. That's not who I am talking to. The Bible condemns the able-bodied person who simply refuses to work. If you have the ability to work, but you refuse to do so because you'd rather sleep in and stay at home to watch *The Price is Right*, you are in sin.

Our society has encouraged this. We live off government handouts. Young men and women live with their parents far too long, so they don't have to embrace responsibility and provide for themselves. This is not God's design.

Sin has marred God's good intentions for work...which means work needs to be redeemed. That's our third point.

Point #3-God Redeemed Work

If you're a Christian, Christ has redeemed you. Through His life, death and resurrection, Jesus purchased a people for God. You have been chosen, called, born again, justified, adopted and set apart for glory in the Name and by the grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Your life belongs completely to Him.

This includes your job. As Christians, we work for King Jesus. Paul's instructions to slaves are helpful here. In Paul's first century Roman context, millions of people were slaves, but it wasn't exactly like the slavery we've known in our history. In many cases, slaves were like employees of their masters. Many Christians were slaves. And Paul gave them these commands.

Slaves, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. (Colossians 3).

Notice the first thing he says, obey your masters. Obey your boss, even if he isn't godly. And not just when he is looking. Not just to be a people pleaser. But do so with sincerity because it's actually the Lord you're working for.

When Joseph served in Potiphar's house, he worked to the best of his ability, because he viewed his job as done for the Lord. Even his decision not to sleep with his boss's wife was because he didn't want to dishonor God.

Christians, do you realize that in Christ, you're working for Jesus at your job? Have you thought about that? Have you thought about what that means for your everyday tasks? When you're dealing with a customer, that's the Lord's customer. When you're fulfilling an order, those are the Lord's goods you're handling.

I will never forget a customer I served when I was working for my father in Indianapolis. A woman came in who wanted to buy an amplifier for the speakers in her car. We talked for a little bit, and when I determined what kind of speakers she had, I recommended an amplifier for her to buy. It was \$300. She said, "That sounds good. Let me check my bank account first to make sure I have enough money." She called her bank, and she said, "Okay, I have just enough in my account. I'll take it." All of a sudden, I found myself in an ethical conundrum because I knew this girl was about to spend her last \$300 on a car amplifier, not exactly a necessity. Everything in me wanted to say, don't do this. Go buy groceries. Put gas in your car. Pay your rent. Don't spend your last dollar on music. But then I realized, I made an agreement with my employer, who was also my father. The agreement was that he'd pay me x amount of dollars to be the best salesman I could be. And if I was going to honor Christ, I needed to sell her the product.

I am not asking you to judge whether I was right or wrong in that situation. I am asking you, do you even think that way at your job? Are you viewing every transaction you make as something the Lord is overseeing? Do you view every customer as someone you should serve for the glory of God?

We must view everything through the lens of being Christ's disciple. When your co-workers are pleasant and a joy to work with, praise God for such good friends. When they're a terror and you dread seeing them, praise God that you have an even better friend in Jesus. When your boss is a tyrant and out of control, praise God there is a better King who is Lord over all. When your boss is kind, praise God for such a good gift.

Look back at our Colossians 3. Christians also work for a better reward. ***Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.*** We not only serve Jesus in our jobs. We are working towards a heavenly reward. When we work hard at our jobs, and do so for the glory of God, we are storing up treasures in Heaven.

This is the best motivation for our work. A pay raise and a promotion can only do so much. But after a while, those won't serve as motivators to produce more work. If we understand that our work is done for His glory, then it doesn't matter if we make 250K or minimum wage, we will be motivated to do our best because we're seeking to please Jesus, not men.

And if you're an owner, manager or supervisor of any kind, the Bible tells you to be like Jesus to those under you. Col. 4:1, ***"Masters, treat your bondservants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven."*** If you're in charge, you're not really in charge. You have a Master over you. Therefore, treat your employees the way Christ treats you—with grace, kindness and fairness.

Jesus makes work fulfilling. He is the greatest source of joy and satisfaction. If you're working to be fulfilled in your job, that is a futile task. You can't expect temporal things to satisfy an eternal soul. Only Christ can achieve such feats. Your heart was made for Him. And it's only in Him that you will find true satisfaction and joy.

In Christ, money takes on a whole new meaning as well. There is nothing wrong with working hard and making lots of money. What is sinful is chasing money so we can have more stuff or feel better about ourselves. Christians, so long as our needs are met, we can be content with what God has given us. And no matter how much we earn, we can be generous with our money.

My father has been a business owner for longer than I have been alive. He's worked hard his whole life. But he didn't become a Christian until he was about 35. Once he started following Christ, he stopped opening his stores on Sundays and began giving generously to the church and to others. It was at this time, his business started to grow. God blessed his work because he honored the Lord with his work and his wealth.

Before we close, let me give you 5 applications to walk away with.

Application

#1-Work for the Lord

I know I already mentioned this, but I can't say it enough. It changes everything when you realize you are working for the Lord and not just for your employer. We must understand

our lives within the context of redemptive history—God’s overarching story. And our jobs are not disconnected from that.

Sebastian Traeger says, “Yes, money is important. Yes, advancement in your career can be good. Yes, you want to help your boss and do a good job. But ultimately you are in your job so you learn to love God and other people better. This is your new assignment.”

#2-Leverage your job for the gospel

Your job is a mission field. If you’re surrounded by unbelievers, understand that God sovereignly placed them in your life for a purpose. Something Pastor Erik told me when I first became a Christian was now that you’re a follower of Jesus, God is going to put people in your life who need Him, because you can help them. Christians you’re not only at your job to make a product or provide a service. You’re there as a missionary for Jesus. Leverage your job for the gospel.

#3-View your job as God’s means to make you like Jesus

Work is hard and it can be frustrating, and sometimes there are days when you feel like you got nothing done. You feel like you wasted your time. But friends, those may be the days where God is accomplishing the most work, not through you, but in you. Remember, God’s goal is to make you more like Jesus and He will use your job towards that end. So, that coworker who may seem like nothing but a pain, God may be using her to grow you in your faith. Maybe God placed you under a tyrannical boss to teach you humility and submission. Perhaps those unreasonable customers are who God is using to teach you patience.

#4-It’s okay to stay at your job

Many people look at their job and can’t see how it honors God. They don’t see how their “secular” job makes any difference in the world. But maybe now you will see that it’s okay to stay in your job, even if you don’t feel “called” there.

Listen to Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians.

¹⁷ Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches... ²⁰ Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. ²¹ Were you a bondservant when called? Do not

be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.)²² For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ.²³ You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men.²⁴ So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God. (1 Cor. 7:17, 20-24)

If you're doing your work for His glory, it doesn't matter what you do (unless it's sinful). You can honor Him and enjoy your work and be content to stay.

#5-Seek to enjoy your work

I will use Piper's words. God is most glorified in your job as you seek to be most satisfied in Him in your work. God desires for you to enjoy your job. He doesn't want you to dread going in or watch the clock when you're there. He wants you to see the significance in what you're doing because of who He is.

QUESTIONS:

1. How has this teaching challenged or changed the way you view work and your job?
2. Discuss some of the reasons that God created work.
3. Discuss why God cursed work.
4. What are some signs that your work or job has become an idol? What are some steps you can take to put God back on that throne if it has become an idol?
5. What are some ways that you can be "on mission" at your job or in the work that you do?
6. List some ways that God may be using your job to make you more like Christ.