

REVIEW FROM LAST WEEK—WORK AS CALLING

Our Work reflects the image of Our God who is a worker

Our Work can be holy ground if consecrated to God in Faith

Our Work is our calling from God, not just a job—purpose, joy, direction, focus, and motivation

Our Work value is not determined by prestige, impact, or financial gain

Our Work can and should be done for the glory of God—Ex. Bach, S.D.G.

Our Work is done Coram Deo, before the face of God, in His presence, under His authority, and for His glory

In God's economy there is NO such thing as a division between the sacred and the secular. No lawful work has a spiritual upper-hand over any other lawful work (Col. 3.17-24). The pyramid of spiritual work with missionaries and pastors on top is an unbiblical division.

Dichotomy: Some work with eternal lasting things of God and salvation while others are called to focus on earthly, temporal less important things of the world. Some are “doing the Lord's work” which will last while others are working for the world which is “passing away.” This too comes from the unbiblical dichotomy and what we believe Jesus came to save. Pastors save souls which will last forever while others work with the physical world which will be destroyed.

Hymns: “The things of earth will soon be past, only what's done for the Lord will last.... Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim”

WINTER 2011: GOD AT WORK

WORK AS MISSION: WHAT WILL GOD MAKE OF OUR WORK?

Opening Illustration: What makes work good? Work in a concentration camp. What is your mission?

I. MISSION OF SALT AND LIGHT (MATTHEW 5.13-14)

Where in the world is the church? As long as we see the church as a what rather than a who, we will be impotent in the world. “Early Christians did not much speak of a person going to church, but more often thought of the church as being present with each person at his place of daily employment. To the degree that his work represented the Spirit's call and the Spirit's response, to that extent the church was actively fulfilling its mission through him. In his chores were embodied its repentance and forgiveness, its struggle with temptation, its victory.” (Paul Minear) Our vocations are part of the strategic intent of God to put us in the world.

II. MISSION OF PROVISION

We need to learn to see God at work through everyday people and events, not just mystical, mountaintop experiences. We must think in terms like: God healed me through the medical staff, God fed me through the farmer and grocer, God spoke to me through the pastor, God served me through the restaurant waiter; God restored my transportation through the mechanic. God protected me through the officer, judge, lawyer; God cared for me through my parents; God provided for me through my broker; God gave me pleasure through the musician or winemaker, etc. If we begin to think that way about the vocation of others, we will think that way about our own vocation. God is using me to feed, heal, restore, care, etc.

Ex. Andrew Carnegie—Donating vast libraries but exploiting his workers

“While these undertakings [charitable activities] are important, I gradually concluded that we could serve society best simply by fulfilling the company's mission. The primary social responsibility of AES was to be the best it could be at meeting the world's need for safe, clean, reliable, and economically priced electricity. That took go to 95 percent of our resources and of our people's skills and efforts....For example, in Leflore County, Oklahoma, unemployment fell from 13.6 percent to 4 percent after AES built a Sao-megawatt plant there. But that was minor compared with what happened after AES acquired a distribution company in the Dominican Republic in 1997. The year before we bought it, 385 Dominicans had died in electricity-related accidents within our utility service area—a fairly typical toll at the time. By 2000, the number of fatalities had dropped to 29. In other words, we saved hundreds of lives because AES took seriously its primary mission "to serve society in an economically sustainable manner with safe, clean, reliable electricity." I can think of no other "project" AES has undertaken that was as socially beneficial. (Dennis Bakke, Co-founder and CEO of AES, *Joy at Work*)

“I believe the only long-term solution to world poverty is business. That is because businesses produce goods, and businesses produce jobs. And businesses continue producing goods year after year, and continue providing jobs and paying wages year after year. Therefore, if we are ever going to see long-term solutions to world poverty, I believe it will come through starting and maintaining productive, profitable business (Wayne Grudem, *Business for the Glory of God*).” But aren't businesses evil and self serving?

III. MISSION OF REDEMPTION, RESTORATION, AND RECONCILIATION

What will God make of your work? Will your work last forever? A hint pointing us forward-- **Psalm 90.16-17:** Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands.

You too are a missionary, but any mission you perceive in your work must be connected to God's own mission in the world. Let's take a look at God's story and see what His mission actually is and how our work can not only reflect God's work but participate in it.

CREATION → FALL → REDEMPTION → CONSUMMATION

Adam's Fruitfulness and our Frustration (Gen. 3.17-19)—Death and Decay will not have the last word.

1 Corinthians 15:57-58: But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

What did the work of Jesus purchase? What will be in heaven? What jobs match the brokenness?

I Corinthians 3.9-15: For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.¹⁰ According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. ¹¹ For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.¹² Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw--¹³ each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. ¹⁴ If the work that anyone has built on the

foundation survives, he will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Revelation 21.22-27: And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. ²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, ²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day--and there will be no night there. ²⁶ They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. ²⁷ But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Isaiah 60. 6-13: A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.⁷ All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall come up with acceptance on my altar, and I will beautify my beautiful house. ⁹ For the coastlands shall hope for me, the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your children from afar, their silver and gold with them, for the name of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he has made you beautiful. ¹¹ Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession. ¹³ The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the plane, and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious.

God's Mission in the world—blessing, restoration, reconciliation—*Therefore, the mission of our work is to participate in and cooperate with God in His mission to restore all things by reconciling them to Himself.*

Romans 8:18-25: For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. ²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

All of our work must be marked by:

1. Hope in God's promised future—can I envision my work being caught up by God in His redemption? Do my purposes match His? Do I live out the fact that there are no little people and no little places?
2. Dependence on the Spirit—Am I approaching my work prayerfully in dependence on God's Spirit rather than in self-reliance? Is my work pervaded by a sense of thankfulness for my gifts/abilities?
3. Trust in God's providence—Do I look for and recognize that God is guiding and providing daily?

Discussion—How does this change the following vocations?

1. Making a Meal for your family
2. Running a company
3. Being a Salesperson
4. Farming the land