

Sermon: Living Your New Life in Your Work (Part 3)

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group

1. What is a job that you would NEVER want to do? Why not?
2. What were you looking for in your 'work'?
What makes your 'work' worthwhile for you?
3. What would happen if everyone did quit working?
4. What would you do if you didn't have 'work'?

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

Pastor Henry's outline for his sermons:

Sin negatively impacted work by:	Jesus Christ brought meaning back by:
1. Making it a struggle (Gen3:17)	Replacing with His eternal perspective(Col 3:23)
2. Making work feel futile (Gen 3:19; Ecc 2:11)	a) Replacing with His call (vocation and occupation) b) Replacing with opportunity to point people to Him (Rom 12:2; Col 3:22; 4:1; Eph 2:10; 1 Tim 4:15,16)
3. Making work an idol (Gen 11:4)	Replacing this with His love and acceptance (1 Peter 2:9)

1. Review the reasons why sin negatively impacts work (chart above).
Which negative impact(s) have you experienced in your work (volunteer, studies, paid, homemaking and parenting etc)?
2. How can work become an 'idol' for people? List a few cultural expectations of the work world? How can these make work an 'idol'?
How do Col 3:23, 24 and 1 Peter 2:9 focus on the true motivation for a Christ-follower's work?
3. Identify the two 'kingdoms' in James 3:13-18? In what ways do these 'kingdoms' explain Christ-followers' purpose in their work? Give some scenarios of how this might play out in a 'work' setting?
4. Matt 5:8 and James 3:17 both use the word 'pure.' What are two meanings in the original language? (see summary) What significance do these meanings have on one's perspective of work and identity?
5. How does Heb 4:9, 10 speak into the negative impacts of sin on work?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. Where have you identified an 'idol' in your work?
2. Which Scriptures (sidebar) help you examine the purpose in all your 'work'?
Take the opportunity to journal/share your thoughts on 'work'?
3. How can the group pray for you?

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Colossians 3:22,24

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, ²⁴since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Hebrews 4:9,10

There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; ¹⁰for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his.

James 3:13-18

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. ¹⁷But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Links to Sermons, Parts 1 and 2:

<https://www.cschurch.ca/sermons/colossians/living-your-new-life-in-your-work/>

<https://www.cschurch.ca/sermons/colossians/living-your-new-life-in-your-work-part-2/>

Sermon Study Summary

In this third part of the series on 'Living Your New Life in Your Work,' Pastor Henry addressed the sin that makes an idol of work. To be clear, when speaking of work, we are not referring to employment in a 9 to 5 job. Homemakers and parents at home, students at school, volunteers everywhere and many others are using their talents, time and abilities to bless others and make our world a better place. Even if we can't physically work, we can pray for those who do, and for God to pour out His blessing and favour on His church as we seek to introduce people to Jesus and help them to become devoted followers of Jesus. When we work, we work; and when we pray, God works – powerfully!

Research and anecdote tell us that most people are not happy with their work. This is unfortunate, for God intended work to be a good thing. God Himself worked (Genesis 1) to create the universe and earth and everything in it. Further, we read that God intended work to be a source of blessing, not a curse (Gen 1&2). However, something went wrong. Genesis 3 tells us that God's plan was broken by sin when our first parents decided to go their own way. Not only was God's plan for creation broken, but also His plan for work. Sin broke work in three different ways: it made work a **struggle**, it made work **futile**, and it made work an **idol**. But this is not the end of the story.

For, Jesus Christ brought meaning back to work, not by removing the sweaty and painful part of work, but by replacing the struggle of work with His eternal perspective. Although we may be bored, mistreated or unappreciated at work, Jesus reminds us that we are not working only for our boss or the accolades of others, but that we are children of the King, and we are working for the Lord. When we are faithful and do our best at whatever work we do, we actually worship God through our work. Secondly, Jesus brings meaning back to work by replacing the futility of work with His call – His vocation: to trust Him and join Him in His mission to see all people come into relationship and friendship with God. We point people to Jesus by how we live our lives and relate to them at home and at work, how we work, how we help them, listen to them, encourage them, believe the best of them and extend grace to them.

Thirdly, Jesus also came to replace our idolizing of work with His love and acceptance. In an interview, Madonna admitted that the only meaning in her life comes from proving to others (through her music) that she is somebody worthwhile. Tim Keller tells of a friend who reached the top of his profession but then was forced to resign and enter rehabilitation for addiction. He refused to blame his crisis on his work situation or others' expectations that he always be brilliant and dynamic. His crisis came about because of his building his life on two premises: that he could control other peoples' opinions and approval by his performance, and that his performance was all that mattered in his life.

God intended work to be a good thing. But when a good thing becomes the 'Ultimate Thing' in life, it is an idol and we are heading toward deep despair, grief and regret. One of the greatest temptations is to see our work as a way to bring glory to us. In Col 3:23, Paul addresses our motivation for work. If we are working for any other reason but to serve and glorify Christ, true contentment will elude us, in life and in work; and we will miss God's very best for us. Both our identity and meaning come to us in one of two ways: we either FIND our identity in who GOD says we are, OR we MAKE our identity through what others say we are.

James writes that there are two sources of wisdom (3:14-17) – earthly (false) wisdom and heavenly (pure) wisdom. Earthly wisdom is based on the premise that this world is all there is and it's up to me to make the best of it. James says this wisdom is demonic, v.15. When we don't believe in God, we are unable to find our identity and significance through who we are in God. So we try to win by competition and comparison, accumulating symbols of success. In Genesis 11:4, the people wanted to build a tower to heaven 'to make a name for themselves': their motivation was pride. Competitive pride is lethal to work: we choose what we think looks good on us, rather than what helps others flourish. We find it difficult to celebrate others' achievements; we take a perverse pleasure in their failures, James 3:16.

The alternative: Placing God in His rightful place at the centre of our lives, and making Him the object of our highest affection. James implies this change of perspective is the foundation of true wisdom that comes from our Father in heaven. Peter describes our identity in God (1 Peter 2:9) that is found in what Jesus did for us by his death and resurrection: we are a child of God, loved and accepted by God. 'Pure' has two meanings in the original language: 'to be clean' and 'to pursue one thing.' God's wisdom begins when I believe and accept that Jesus did on the cross what I could not. He forgave me and cleansed me so that by His grace I am reconciled with my heavenly Father, the source of my salvation, identity, significance and value. We are pure of heart (clean and forgiven) and set free by God from all our sins and regrets. We are now free to pursue the one thing – loving and trusting Jesus and living for Him, and finding true rest and contentment: in work, in life.