

Issues facing Christians Today: Work - Drudge or Glory?

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters (Colossians 3:23)

Three overarching points to set the scene:

1. God created us and put us *in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it* (Genesis 2:15). Our motive should be to obey his will. While this includes providing for our needs and the needs of others, it is also his will that we are good stewards of the creation we inhabit.
2. God works, and human beings are made in his image and we need to reflect his qualities as creator and redeemer in every part of our lives, including work.
3. In the context of the fall there will always be an element of frustration in work. However, we should still seek to collaborate with his original design and find ways to serve God in whatever kind of work we are involved.

In this evening's service I want us to look at:

- a) **The centrality of work in biblical terms and work-life balance**
- b) **Being salt and light in the world, a world which incorporates work**
- c) **How church can provide resources to support us in a variety of work situations**

Bible passages to guide us:

Topic a

Genesis 1:1: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

Genesis 1:31: *God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning - the sixth day.*

Genesis 2:15: *The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

Genesis 3:17b-19: *Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. ¹⁹ By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.*

Ecclesiastes 2:17-26: ¹⁷ *So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind. ¹⁸ I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun, because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. ¹⁹ And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningless. ²⁰ So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labour under the sun. ²¹ For a person may labour with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. ²² What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labour under the sun? ²³ All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless. ²⁴ A person*

can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in their own toil. This too, I see, is from the hand of God, ²⁵ for without him, who can eat or find enjoyment? ²⁶ To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

Exodus 20:8-11: ⁸ *“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

How do these passages point to work (in its broadest sense) being drudge and glory?
What does the Exodus passage tell us about work-life balance? Have we got it right?

Topic b

Matthew 5: 13-16: ¹³ *“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

As Christians we are called to be *salt and light*. What does this mean in practice in a work context?

Topic c

Ephesians 4:13: *until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*

“I teach Sunday School 45 minutes a week and they haul me in front of church to pray for me. I teach in a school 45 hours a week and the church has never prayed for me.” (comment from a teacher in *Setting God’s People Free*, a recent report from the Archbishops’ Council of the Church of England.

What are your reactions to this? What are the implications for our church?

To conclude: Colossians 3:23: *Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters*

Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, may your name indeed be hallowed. May your kingdom come, your will be done, as in heaven so in our nation, as in heaven so in our fields and cities, in our homes and streets, in our schools and offices, in our factories and clubs, in our hospitals and hospices; as in heaven so in our church, in our hearts and minds and spirit. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.