

Work Is a Divine Gift and Calling
Selected Scriptures
September 4, 2016
Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church, Southlake, Texas

Well, I invite you to turn with me to God's Word this morning. We are continuing a series on those truths that today's church has largely forgotten. And, of course, this weekend is Labor Day weekend. I've always thought it was a bit humorous that we take a day off of work to celebrate work. Don't get me wrong, I'm not complaining, I'm just observing, it's interesting. But it is right, I think, that we as Christians celebrate labor because we all will spend the majority of our lives working, some within the home, some working for others, and under others in a company or business, some employing others and running a company, still others at some point in life retired, but still working hard and involved in various activities and ministries.

The average worker will work full time from the age of 22 to the age of 67, that's 45 years of life spent working and, on average, 47 hours a week invested in work. This is a large portion of our lives. Although it is a constant reality in our lives, most people have no concept of the value of work. Sadly, even many Christians have lost their understanding of what used to be called the protestant work ethic. Listen to John Calvin in the Institutes of the Christian Religion. He writes, "each individual has his own kind of living assigned to him by the Lord as a sort of sentry post so that he may not heedlessly wander about throughout life. There is no employment so mean and sorted," so low or common in other words, "as not to appear truly respectable and be deemed highly important in the sight of God."

Now that is an extraordinary statement. Calvin is saying, and this was the understanding of the reformers and, frankly, all back through church history it was the understanding of believers that whatever it is you do day in and day out, whether it's within the home, outside the home, working for others, hiring others, self-employed, whatever it is you do daily matters to God. In fact, it is a divine calling. Understanding that, Christians have historically been the most diligent workers, the most creative workers, and often the most successful workers.

But this is another of the truths that today's church has largely forgotten. The truth is this, work is a divine gift and calling. Not only does this topic fit the Labor Day weekend well, but I think it fits very well into the series that we've been doing this summer. By the way, today and next

week and we'll complete that series and get back into Romans 4, but I've entitled the summer series Hold Fast, Forgotten Truths We Must Always Remember.

Let me ask you as a believer this morning, do you know, do you remember the origin of work? What about the reasons for work? What about the value of work? Do you know how to do your work every day as unto Christ? That's what I want us to examine together this morning. We'll consider several passages, but two in the book of Ephesians will provide the, sort of, framework for our study, so I invite you to turn there with me. From two passages in Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus we discover several key principles about our work or vocation, whatever it is you do daily, regardless of your stage of life.

So let's look at these principles together, starting in Ephesians 4. And I want you to notice verse 28, "He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need." Now in the context here Paul is illustrating the process of sanctification, specifically the principle of replacement. If, as believers, we're going to overcome the sin habits in our lives, we can't just stop doing those things. We instead have to replace those sin patterns with positive virtues. And the virtue that replaces stealing is hard work.

But what Paul teaches in verse 28 isn't just for those who are tempted to steal. In fact, the second half of verse 28 spells out for us the first two principles about work that every Christian must understand. Let's look at them together. Principle number one, work is a command, a divine gift, and a reflection of God's character. Now, this is implied within the context of this verse. It's in this verse, in this first principle as well, that we learn in a sense about the origin and the nature of work. Verse 28 says, "rather," instead of stealing, "the Christian must labor." Now understand this, whether you struggle with stealing or not, all of us as believers are called to put on the positive virtue of hard work.

Now, the Greek word for labor here means to work hard to the point of exhaustion. That's what we're called to do. Now why is that? Why would it be right for Christians, all of us, to put on the virtue of hard work? You know, it's crucial if we're going to understand this, to remember that work was not the result of the fall. That's what a lot of Christians think. You know, it's because of what Adam did I have to work every day. No, that's not true at all. Work, in fact, is

a fundamental part of the character of God. God works. Obviously He worked in creation. In fact, in Genesis 2:2 we learned that “God completed the work” of creation. That’s what it’s called. God worked for six days, we’re told, in creating the universe.

But that isn’t all the work God did. You know, a lot of people hear that and they think, well, creation was complete after six days and God has been resting ever since. No, that’s not true. God has continued to work since the fall. Jesus put it this way in John 5:17, “My Father is working until now.” You say, well, if He’s done with creation, what does God do? Well, first of all, there’s the preservation of everything He made. God sustains everything He created, moment by moment. God, actively, using the processes He’s put into place, continues to sustain life. The reason your heart keeps beating every moment is because, ultimately, of God and His work. He sustains everything that He made. He keeps the stars in their courses. He keeps the cycle of the seasons. He keeps the rain and the hydrological cycle watering the earth. He covers all of those things in His work. And He directs everything that He made and sustains to the ends that He determined. In other words, God in His providence is causing all things to work out as He planned. God is working. And, of course, He continues the work of redemption and the advance of the kingdom of His Son. God is working until now and God will continue working throughout human history. God works.

So, it’s not a surprise then that as a perfect reflection of the image and activity of God that the first man Adam worked, and he worked before the fall. This is clear in Genesis 1 and 2. Listen to Genesis 2:15, “the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it.” Adam was made for work and he worked before there was sin in the world. So what happened then in the fall when it comes to work? Well, in Genesis 3, as a result of the fall, all that changed was this, God cursed man’s activity of work so that it became a struggle. Man now has to fight against a cursed earth and he has to bring out of it what he needs by the sweat of his brow.

So we worked, men worked, Adam and Eve worked before the fall. Since the fall, we work in a cursed world where work is harder. But understand this, in the eternal state, Christian, we will continue to work. Listen to Revelation 22:3, talking about the eternal state, the new earth, “There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in that new

earth and in that capital city,” as it’s described there, and listen to this, “and His bond servants,” that’s us, “will serve Him.” You will work for eternity. Work then is a reflection of God. God works. We’re made to work and we will continue to work.

But not only is work God-like, work is also, for us, a divine gift and blessing. I wish I had time to develop this but let me just give you a couple of references. Solomon teaches us this in the book of Ecclesiastes, Ecclesiastes 3:13. He says “that every man who eats and drinks,” that is, enjoys life, “sees good in all his labor – this is the gift of God.” It’s good to see good in the work that you accomplish. This is a gift of God. Ecclesiastes 5:19, “as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward,” and listen to this, “and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.”

You know, this is so antithetical to the thinking of unbelievers around us, but this is the understanding of work that shaped and framed the protestant reformation. Listen to Luther, this is Martin Luther talking about work, he says, “Your work is a very sacred matter. God delights in it. And through it He wants to bestow His blessing on you. The world does not consider work a blessing, therefore it flees and hates it. But the righteous who fear the Lord labor with a ready and cheerful heart, for they know God’s command and will. Thus, a pious,” or a righteous, “farmer sees Psalm 128:2 written on his wagon and plow. A cobbler,” that is, a man who makes shoes, “sees it on his leather and awl. A laborer sees it on wood and iron.” What is Psalm 128:2? Well, he says, “When you eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you.”

Luther goes on to say, “The world inverts the thought and says miserable you will be, and it will not be well with you, for these things must forever be endured and borne.” Work is just something you’ve got to put up with. Luther finishes, “But they say, happy are those who lead a life of leisure and without labor have the ability to live.” Luther says, unbelievers, they want a life without work, but believers understand that God works, He made us to work, and they find joy and delight as much as they can within work. So work then is a divine gift through which God bestows His blessing on us.

But not only is it a reflection of His character, and not only is it a divine gift, work is also a command. Look again at verse 28 of Ephesians 4, this is not just addressed to the one who

steals, ultimately this is a Christian virtue we are all to put on, “he must labor,” to the point of exhaustion. By the way, the fourth of the 10 commandments makes this point as well. It demands that we devote the majority of our time to work. Exodus 20:9 says, “Six days you shall labor and do all your work.” Now that doesn’t mean that we have to work six days every week. But what is clearly being said in the fourth commandment is that God is sovereign over our time and He has determined that a majority of our time would be spent working, and one day a week time would be set aside for worship, corporate worship.

So understand then, this is really important, work is an essential part of the Christian life. In fact, if a person isn’t willing to work, Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 3:10, “he’s not to eat, either.” He goes on in 2 Thessalonians 3 to say, if there’s a Christian who can work but isn’t working, who is being lazy and refusing to work, then that person needs to be disciplined out of the church. Scripture puts an extremely high value on work. If you doubt that, just think about our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you remember, are you aware, that our Lord worked a regular job like you work, for 17 years of His earthly life? From the age of coming to manhood at 13 in His bar mitzvah until He began His ministry at age 30, He worked a regular job, just like you do. In fact, in Mark 6:3 we read, “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary.”

Carpenter, the Greek word, literally means a craftsman. The word is broad, like our English word builder. It can refer to someone who does the work of a carpenter. It can refer to someone who does the work of a brick mason. It can refer even to woodworking. It’s interesting, Justin Martyr, one of the early church fathers who was disciplined by the Apostle John, writes this, “When Jesus was among men He made plows and yokes and other farm implements.” J. Oswald Sanders writes, “Jesus saw no incongruity in the Lord of Glory, standing in the saw pit, laboriously cutting the thick logs into planks, or using a plane and hammer. He was a carpenter, a working man who earned His living, as others of His contemporaries, by manual skill.” And then he says this, listen, “If it was not beneath the Son of God to work, then surely it is beneath none of His children. He has imparted to a life of toil, both dignity and nobility.” So Christian, understand then the importance of work. It is a command to you. It is a divine gift to you. And in doing it you are reflecting the very character of God Himself.

Now, a second principle about work that we find here in this passage is this, you must work for biblical reasons. Look at verse 28 again, “he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need.” Now, that is a really important thing, because most people work, those who work hard, do so only for themselves, for their own comfort, for their own satisfaction, for their own financial success, their own advancement. But as Christians, those cannot be the only reasons we work. There are other, far more compelling biblical reasons to work than those.

A couple of those compelling reasons are here in this text, and others are another place. Let me briefly point them out to you. First of all, if you’re going to work for biblical reasons, you need to work to care for your own needs and enjoyment, to care for your own needs and enjoyment. Now, notice implied in verse 28 is that instead of stealing from others to meet our needs, we are to work to provide for our own needs. It’s not directly stated, but it’s clearly implied. And it is explicitly stated by Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12. There Paul says this, “work with your hands so that you will not be in any need.” You’re to work to meet your own needs.

But the Bible also says, and this is really interesting, that what we earn by our work is also to be used not only for our needs, but even for our enjoyment. God is such a generous and gracious God to us. Listen to how the Old Testament puts it in Ecclesiastes 5:18-19, “Here is what I have seen to be good and fitting:” Solomon writes, “to eat and to drink and enjoy oneself in all one’s labor in which he toils under the sun during the few years of his life which God has given him; for this is his reward.” That is, from God. “Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth,” and by the way, that’s all of us, when you look at the seven billion people on this planet, we’re all rich. He says, “as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God.”

That’s the Old Testament, listen to Paul in the New Testament, 1 Timothy 6:17 says, “Instruct those who are rich in this present world to fix their hope on God,” and then he adds this, “who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.” Listen, God expects you to use what you earn to meet your needs, but also for the enjoyment of life. There’s nothing wrong with that within the

framework of His law. We're to work to meet our own needs and to enjoy the fruit of our labor as God's good gift.

A second reason we should work is to benefit others. Look at verse 28, "working with his own hands," and this is a fascinating way to say this, "working with his own hands, the good." What does Paul mean? If your job is not encouraging other people to sin, and I hope it's not, if it's a legitimate job, then understand this, it benefits other people. Your job benefits other people. It's for their good. In fact, your daily work is part of God's common grace to His creatures to make their lives better in a fallen world. Is that how you think about what you do each day, that you're an instrument of God's common grace? Listen, that is true whatever you do. If you work within the home, then you are benefiting those people in your home, and through them you're benefiting the people that they will one day interact with and influence.

Take work outside the home and there are a lot of ways to divide it, but if you look at the two basic categories that are often used, you're either working in the service industry in some way, either serving or leading in a service industry, or you're in a manufacturing industry where you either make or you supervise those who make things that are placed in this planet for the good of the creatures who are here. Regardless of what you do, whether you're in the service industry or whether you're in the manufacturing industry, whatever your daily tasks may be, you are God's instrument for good, His common grace, to help relieve the effects of the fall on this planet, and I don't care what it is you do.

In fact, let me encourage you to do something. Think about what you do and think about how God uses that for the benefit of other human beings. Again, if it's any profitable employment, it's any legitimate employment, that is true. And you need to think about what that is, because you are an instrument of God in the lives of other people. So, understand that your job benefits others.

Thirdly, you're to work to provide for your dependents. This one is not in this text, we will come back to this text in a moment, but this one is outside of this text, to provide for your dependents. It's related to the ones we've covered. That's why I put it here. To provide for your dependents, 2 Corinthians 12:14 says, "children are not responsible to save up for their parents, but parents for their children." We parents have a responsibility to care for our kids.

Paul, in 1 Timothy 5:8, puts it this way, “if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” We have a responsibility to our dependents. By the way, in the context of 1 Timothy 5:8, that’s not just your kids, that’s also your parents and grandparents as they age.

Number four, we’re to work so that we can give to others in need. Now look back at Ephesians 4:28, “he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with the one who has need.” The word need means a lack of some necessity. We are to work so that we can share what we earn with those who lack what is necessary. This is what you did last week in the special offering, caring for others, and this is what’s commanded throughout the New Testament. Romans 12:13, “contribute to the needs of the saints.” Galatians 6:10, “let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” First Timothy 6:18, “Instruct the rich to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share.” Hebrews 13:16, “do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

Do you understand that part of the reason you work, in the divine plan and scheme, is not only so you can meet your own needs and enjoy life, but so that you can help others who are in need? And in fact, let me put it negatively, if you fail to use the resources that God gives you to benefit the lives of others, to help others, you are in effect stealing from them, because God has given you those resources to that end.

A fifth reason to work is to advance Christ’s kingdom through the church. In Matthew 6:20 Jesus says, “store up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” Use your earthly wealth to invest in heaven. How do you do that? Later in that same chapter, verse 33, “seek first the kingdom of God.” You invest in the kingdom and in kingdom work.

Another reason that we work is to be a testimony for our Lord to unbelievers. Did you realize how your work can be a testimony for Christ in your workplace? Paul says this in Titus 2:9-10, he says,

Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, not pilfering, but showing all good faith [*listen to this*] so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

How you work in your workplace either adorns the gospel or it detracts from the beauty of the gospel.

And the final reason that Scripture gives us to work is, to promote God's glory. This is, of course, the end of everything. Romans 11:36 says, "For from Him and through Him and to Him," that is, to His glory, "are all things." That includes your work. Those then are the biblical reasons that you and I are to work.

Now, the other principles that I want us to see about work or over just a page in Ephesians 6:5-8. Now, you'll notice verse 5 begins with the word "Slaves." Don't let that throw you. This is obviously a passage written primarily to slaves. There were about 60 million slaves in the Roman empire. As many as a third of the people in the largest cities, like Ephesus to which Paul writes, were slaves.

Now, I don't want to get bogged down here, but just because there's so much confusion about this, let me just briefly explain what the New Testament says about slavery. Four brief points. Number one, the New Testament condemns the kidnapping of freeborn individuals for the purpose of slavery. First Timothy 1:10 uses the word kidnappers, that's the very word. They kidnap for the purpose of enslaving them. In other words, the New Testament completely outlaws the American institution of slavery.

Secondly, the New Testament establishes the spiritual equality of all men. Galatians 3:28, "there is neither slave nor free man, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Thirdly, the New Testament sets a high value on individual freedom. In 1 Corinthians 7 Paul teaches that if a slave could not change his condition of slavery, he was to be content in his circumstances. But, if he could gain his freedom through legal means, he was to pursue that freedom. And then finally, the New Testament explains how slaves and masters, just in the reality that existed, should treat each other. Tragically, slavery continues to exist in our world and we need to admit

that. There's sexual slavery. There's work slavery. There's financial slavery. But by God's grace, you and I don't live in a system of slavery.

Still, understand this, this passage is applicable to us, Paul says it is. Look at verse 8, he says, listen, the principles I have put here are true, "whether you are slave or free." In other words, it is legitimate to apply the principles in this passage to every person who works, whether they work as a slave, which none of us do, or free, which we do.

So, let's look at the principles. The third principle, then that's here is, you must submit to your boss out of respect for Christ. Look at verse 5, "Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh." In other words, manifest a pattern, a habit of uninterrupted obedience. In Colossians 3:22, the parallel passage, it says, "in all things obey those who are your masters on earth." Now, of course, as with other human authorities, your boss's authority over you ends when it conflicts with God's authority in Scripture or with the higher human authority of government. You don't have to obey your employer if your employer tells you to do what is illegal, or to do what the Bible explicitly forbids, or not to do what the Bible explicitly commands. You can't do wrong legally or biblically, but apart from that we are to submit to those over us in the workplace.

Now understand this, since you are an employee and not a slave, as the one Paul was primarily writing to here, you can always change jobs. But as long as you work for someone, you must submit to their lawful commands and respect them. You say, well, what if my boss isn't deserving of respect? Okay, look at verse 5, "be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling." Now, every time Paul uses that expression outside of this text, it's referring to God. So understand this, he's saying we should obey the commands of those in authority over us in the workplace, not out of fear and trembling for them, but out of fear and trembling for Christ. And he makes that very clear, by the way, in the parallel passage, Colossians 3:22, where he says, "obey those who are your masters on earth, fearing the Lord." So, we must obey and submit to those who are over us in the workplace.

Number four, you must do your work with integrity. Notice verse 5, "in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ." This has to do with pure motives. In other words, what's going on in your

heart and what you're doing outwardly, match. That's integrity. That's how we're to do our work, with integrity, with sincerity, with purity of motive.

Number five, you must do your work with your whole heart. Verse 6, "not by way of eyeservice, as menpleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." By the way, Paul coins his own word here, the word eyeservice. It's not found elsewhere in Greek. He just sticks two words together and it refers to a person who does his work solely to catch the eye of his master or boss. It's serving that person well as long as he's watching and then cutting corners or being lazy when he's not.

This is such a common problem in the workplace that it is probably the most common form of work humor. We've all heard or seen the cartoons where the boss walks in and suddenly everyone gets busy. I remember when I worked in the shipyards as an electrician, this was a huge problem. For example, I would be down in the engine room, sort of way down in the ship, out of sight, running wire, wiring engines, or whatever, and because it was in a sort of out of the way place, other workmen would come there and they would just sort of lounge around and talk to each other and catch up on the latest sports news, whatever. But when their boss came into the engine room it was hilarious to watch the change. From the moment he walked in the room the place became a beehive of activity. And as soon as he walked out the other door it was like everybody in the room was unplugged. The energy was just vacuumed out of the room.

That's eyeservice. And Paul says, if you just work hard when the boss is around, it's because, notice what he says, you are a "menpleaser." Now notice, eyeservice is the behavior, but the deeper problem at the heart level is that you are a "manpleaser." You're trying only to please man. Now don't misunderstand, that doesn't mean you're doing it for their sakes. You're not trying to please them in the good sense. You're trying to please them for your own sake, for your own profit, for your own advantage. It's ultimately selfishness. And instead Paul says, don't be like that. Instead, notice, we should work "as slaves of Christ," and, I love this, he says, "as slaves of Christ," and when you do that, you are "doing the will of God."

Do you understand this? When you do what you do each day, whatever that is in your context, in your workplace, where you work, when you do that from the heart "as to Christ," you are "doing the will of God." Now what makes that remarkable is, remember, Paul is writing to

slaves. And many of the slaves to whom he wrote, they had the lowest, most menial jobs on the planet. Some of these slaves sitting in the Ephesian church would have had the duty of emptying and washing out the privy pots. Others would have had the responsibility of washing the family's feet when they came in from the marketplace. In Roman culture, other slaves would have been more elevated. They would have managed the household, they would have tutored the children and some slaves in Roman culture may have been leaders in the city government, doctors, and tradesmen.

Do you see the point? If you are working for Christ, whatever your job may be, whatever your daily tasks, as you carry them out you are "doing the will of God." That's what Paul is saying. And that means it's worth doing well. Notice how he ends the verse, "from the heart." Literally the Greek text says, "from the soul." If you work for Christ, your tasks are God's will, and therefore you should do it with your whole heart. Again, in the parallel passage, Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men." William Barclay writes, "The conviction of the Christian workman is that every piece of work he produces must be good enough to show God."

Number six, you must work for your employer's best interest. Verse 7 says, "With good will rendering service." "With good will," that is, with a spirit of good will, toward whom? Toward your employer. Even if you're a slave, Paul says, serve your master with a genuine concern for his good, that he would prosper and that he would come to know the Lord.

Let me ask you, does it matter to you that the business where you work prospers and is successful? If you're a Christian it should. You're supposed to be looking out for that person's good will, for their good, that they prosper. That's what Christ demands of you and demands of me as well.

Number seven, you actually work for Jesus Christ, you actually work for Jesus Christ. Look at verse 7, "but with good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men." He's said this before, notice verse 5, "as to Christ." Verse 6, "as slaves of Christ." Verse 7, "as to the Lord." Do you see what Paul is saying? He's saying, do what you do every day as if Jesus Christ were your master, He is. Do what you do in your job every day as if Jesus Christ were your boss, He is.

Let me ask you, if Christ were the leader of your company or your business, if He were your immediate supervisor, would you be a better employee than you are today? What changes would you make? Listen, it's not make believe to think of Christ as your boss. Paul says, it's a reality. We are not to work simply as if we're working for men, but as if we're working for Christ Himself. Is that how you think about your job each day? About your duties, whether it's in the home or out of the home?

Number eight, our Lord will reward every legitimate task. This is amazing. Look at verse 8, "knowing," he says, I want you to do this, "knowing," this should be common knowledge among Christians, "that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free." Notice the comprehensive terms here, "each one," every Christian, without exception, "whatever good thing he does," whatever kind of work you do, whatever your tasks look like day in and day out, whether large or small, "this he will receive back from the Lord." In other words, the Lord will reward you.

This is a real encouragement because human bosses often miss a lot of the ways we contribute to the organization or business where we work. Have you ever thought, have you ever heard anyone else say, nobody knows all I do around here. If you're a Christian, you should never think that, you should never say that, because your boss knows everything you do, and He doesn't miss one single task done for His glory and He will reward you. This is how we ought to think about work.

Now let me say to you, if you're here this morning and you're not a Christian, it's really important for you to understand that while work is a gift to you and it's a good thing in your life, it will never satisfy your soul. A lot of people spend their whole lives working for that next promotion, that next great adventure, that next opportunity, that next larger income, whatever it might be, they spend their whole lives climbing the ladder of success, only to find that the ladder is leaning against the wrong building. It's not going to meet your heart's needs. It's not going to fill the hole in your heart that God alone can fill. The only way your work will come to matter is if you will humble yourself before your Creator, if you will repent of your sins and cry out for Him to forgive you, to make you His own through the death of His son, Jesus Christ. It's the only way work will ultimately matter at all. It has to be "as unto Christ" to last. Otherwise

it'll be gone. The moment you're dead, it's gone. It will mean nothing. But in Him it matters for eternity.

And if you're already a believer, these are the principles that every Christian should know about work. Your vocation as a whole and all of your daily tasks should be done for two reasons, as service to Jesus Christ and as service to the other people around you. That's why we work. John Stott writes, "Our great need is the clear sightedness to see Jesus Christ and to set Him before us. It is possible for the housewife to cook a meal as if Jesus Christ were going to eat it or to spring clean as if Jesus Christ were to be the honored guest. It is possible for teachers to educate children, for doctors to treat patients, and nurses to care for them, for attorneys to help clients, shop assistants to serve customers, accountants to audit books, secretaries to type letters, as if in each case they were serving Jesus Christ. This is what Christians have always believed." Beloved, hold fast to the truth that your work is a divine gift and a divine calling from God, do it as unto Him. Let's pray together.

Father, thank You for how profoundly Your word speaks to the practical issues of our lives. Lord, we spend so much of our lives working. We thank You that that's a reflection, ultimately, of You, the residual image of You in us. You work. We work. Father, help us not to think like pagans, not to think like unbelievers think about work, but help us to think like Christians and to work as unto Christ, knowing that for every single task done as unto Him and done well from the soul, He will reward us.

Father, I pray for those here this morning who don't know Him. Help them to see that without Christ, even their work, as good a gift as that is, is meaningless, it's vanity, it's chasing after wind. And may they pursue You and the forgiveness that's found in You through Your Son and His work on the cross, His death in the place of all who would believe in Him. We pray that today would be that day. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen