

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-7-10 AM
 “A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF WORK”
 1 THESSALONIANS 4:11-12
 #4 in Series, “A Biblical Worldview”

A Biblical worldview is seeing all of life through the lens of Scripture. In this series, we are looking at several areas of life and saying, “This is what the Bible says about this area of life. The areas we are looking at are origins, man’s condition, science, family, education, race, social justice, the arts, economics, stewardship, government, and purpose. Today we are looking at work.

Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was a Dutch Pastor, theologian, and served as Holland’s Prime Minister. His most famous quote was this: “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’” [Quoted in Darrow Miller, “Lifework” Page 28] That domain certainly includes our work. All of our life (including our work life) is to be lived conscious that we are in the presence of God, under the authority of God and motivated by the glory and honor of God. That worldview of work will revolutionize a person’s life.

Our text gives us the ideal of a believer’s work life. We are to do our work with a quiet excellence in a way that doesn’t call attention to ourselves. We are to resist comparing ourselves with others and mind our own lives. Our work should provide a product or a service and we should do it well. The result is that “your daily life may win the respect of outsiders” (NIV). With this approach to work, you will lack nothing needed or again the NIV translation: “so that you will not be dependent on anybody”. There will be no need of long term help from the government, church, or relatives. Let’s examine a Biblical Worldview of work.

I. The Origin of Work

Most people who know at least a little about the Bible think that work is a part of the curse that came upon mankind when sin came into the world. As we will see in just a moment, sin changed work, but work is **not** the result of sin entering the world. One study of 250,000 workers for 4,000 companies including all sorts of job types and education levels found that 80% of all workers at all levels were unhappy and frustrated with their jobs [Study by Dr. Herbert M. Greenburg, Princeton NJ]. That’s really sad! Most of us who are not in school or retired spend close to a third of our lives in the workplace. If indeed Jesus is Lord over all of life, He is Lord over your work. I cannot believe that it is His will for 80% of all workers to miserable with their work. I have a book in my library that says a lot in the title. The title is “Your Work Matters to God”. Since He is Lord over your job, your work does matter to Him. Let’s look at the origin of Work. We will find that God is the origin of work.

A. God Is a Worker

Many times in the Bible we see the word “works” with God as the subject. **Genesis 2:2-3 (NKJV)** “² And on the seventh day God ended **His work** which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all **His work** which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all **His work** which God had created and made.” God worked in bringing about creation. Admittedly, He spoke it into being and the concept of effort doesn’t apply to God (He rested on the seventh day not because He was tired, but because He was through). God’s work wasn’t finished after the 6 days of creation. He works now sustaining what started. **Colossians 1:16-17 (ESV)** “¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” Jesus speaks of the Father working in **John 5:17 (ESV)** “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is working until now, and I am working.’” An interesting study would be to look up in a concordance the word “Work” each time it is coupled with God. You will be surprised at how much the Bible says about our God being a worker. One of the main places he is at work is in you! **Philippians 2:13 (NKJV)** “for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.”

B. Man Was Given Work before Sin

When God created us, He wired us up to work, to accomplish things. How do I know that? **Genesis 1:26a (NKJV)** “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...’” We saw in the last study that in His image means to be like Him. God is a worker; He created us to work. Listen to what He says about the first man and woman before sin ever came into the world. **Genesis 2:15 (ESV)** “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden **to work it** and keep it.” There was work when everything was perfect before sin ruined creation. God gave man a command in **Genesis 1:28 (NKJV)** “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” The word “subdue” implies that Adam and Eve were to make the resources of the earth useful for their own benefit. That involves work. You were made to work. There is no age limit on that statement either. That’s why I believe that the American concept of retirement is totally unbiblical! Your work may change, but 80 & 90 year olds need to work. I have a relative who is a very successful developer and builder. He is well past retirement age and yet still works full time. He shared with me a while back why he continues working. He said something like this: “I don’t need the money; I just get a great deal of satisfaction in seeing a project come together; the money I make is just a bonus”. A part of being created in the image of God is the need to work.

C. Sin Affected Work

When sin came into the world as recorded in Genesis 3, the image of God in us was marred and distorted though it is still there (see last week’s message). A part of the curse of sin had to do with work. **Genesis 3:17-19 (NKJV)** “¹⁷ Then to Adam He said, ‘Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: ‘Cursed *is* the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat *of* it all the days of your life. ¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. ¹⁹ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return.’” The work that was totally fulfilling and enjoyable now has an element of “toil” in it. Toil is translated “painful labor” in the HCSB. No matter how much you enjoy your job; there are parts of it that are “toil”, “painful labor”. Sometimes the job is mostly toil and painful labor. That’s a result of sin. Even with the “toil” element, you are wired up to work.

D. We Will Work in Heaven

Don’t ever get the idea that in heaven we will sit on a cloud and strum a harp for eternity. We will work. In Revelation 22, we are given a description of heaven and we are told in **Revelation 22:3 (NKJV)** “And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.” With the curse removed, there will be no more toil, but fulfilling, productive work. I think we will design things and build things and accomplish things. I think it is reasonable to assume (though it is not specifically stated in the Bible) that in hell there will be no work. It is described as being outer darkness and a part of the torment is likely that those there will never accomplish anything or produce anything.

II. The Sacredness of Work

Work is not biblically and morally neutral; work is commanded by God and the need for work is from God. Work is not secular. All work that is honorable and does not contradict Scripture is sacred. The word “sacred” according to the dictionary refers to that which is offered to deity. In that sense, our work is sacred because it should be offered to God as an offering of obedience. Most people have a “disconnect” between their work and God. The unspoken and often un- thought- out view is that God is concerned with my church stuff and even with my family stuff, but work is secular and God has nothing to do with that. Some have called this view “dualism”. Others have called it the two-story view of life. Here is the problem with this two story view of life and seeing our work as secular and something that God isn’t that interested in. First, we miss a tremendous opportunity to see our workplace as the fertile field it is to make disciples. Work has intrinsic value because it is a part of our being in God’s image, but in addition it is a

laboratory where we can put on display the difference that Christ can make in a life. As you deal with the office jerk with kindness, refuse to listen to the dirty jokes, show compassion to the hurting, forgive those who wrong you, manifest joy, and do your work with integrity and excellence, God is glorified and Christ is magnified. When we have the two-story view of life we tend to leave God out in the “secular”. Second, when we don’t see our work as an offering to God and thus sacred, we tend to become materialistic and focus on material things for their own sake. We begin to work, not for the glory of God but for the prestige and money and the stuff that money will buy. Work then begins to control our thoughts, take an inordinate amount of time, take precedence over our family and ministry and separate itself from our walk with God. There is no time for ministry in the Body of Christ, discipling others, and deepening in the Word. We begin to struggle with pride as we compare ourselves with others as to position and compensation and standard of living. Into our heart comes selfishness, hard-heartedness, and greed. Never forget that work is an offering to God and that will insure that it takes its proper place.

III. The Purpose of Work

When work loses its Biblical purpose we tend to start finding our sense of worth and identity in our work. I read an interesting quote by tennis great Chris Evert. She was a leading tennis player in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Her career win-loss record was the best of any singles player in history. As Chris Evert faced retirement, she was petrified. In an interview she said, “I had no idea who I was, or what I could be apart from tennis. I was depressed and afraid because so much of my life had been defined by being a tennis champion. I was completely lost. Winning made me feel like I was somebody. . It made me feel pretty. It was like being hooked on a drug. I needed the wins, the applause, in order to have an identity” [Quoted in Tim Keller, “Counterfeit Gods”, Page 77]. That same thing can apply to sales, medical, owning a business or being a Pastor. The other extreme when we lose the Biblical purpose of work is that we become lazy, sloppy, unmotivated, and inefficient at our work. We live for the week-end, vacations, and the day we can retire. It has been my observation that there are more of the latter than the former in the workplace. These same temptations apply to stay at home Moms. There is the extreme of trying to do everything and comparing yourself to others or just getting done what has to be done and living a lazy, undisciplined life. If we are keeping the purpose of work in the center of our focus, what is the purpose of work?

A. To Glorify God

You probably figured that one would be first! **1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV)** “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” If such mundane things as eating and drinking are to be seen as opportunities to glorify God, then how much more that which takes up about a third of your time here on planet earth. Wayne Grudem calls our work, “A neglected way to glorify God”. The next time you ask someone their vocation, respond like this: “An accountant; what a great way to glorify God!” “You are a truck driver; what a great way to glorify God”. You will get some strange looks, but you will be telling the truth. What does it mean to do your work to the glory of God? It means that your work puts God’s attributes on display. Your diligence and effectiveness in work spotlights God’s perfect effectiveness. Your caring for others and seeking the best for others spotlights God’s caring and love. But it is not just that we glorify God as we work; we glorify God in our work. Our provision of a service or product to others magnifies God’s provision for us. Caring for children magnifies God’s care for His children. Exercising creativity magnifies God’s ultimate creativity. Through our work we can obey Christ in **Matthew 5:16 (NKJV)** :Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and **glorify your Father** in heaven.” Don’t you believe that Jesus Carpentry skills magnified the Father? Don’t you imagine that Paul’s tents were strongly desired because of their excellent craftsmanship? Don’t you believe that Luke was an effective and caring physician? When you see your work as one of the main opportunities to glorify God, it will change your view of work.

B. To Meet Basic Needs

This next statement may come across as being harsh, but I say it in love. When a person has health and the mental capacity, it is God’s will that they meet their basic needs through work. It is not God’s will that anyone depend on the government, relatives, or charity from others. The exception is a temporary

situation where a crisis has occurred. One of the reasons that God allows these crisis situations is to teach us to love others. The goal in that situation of being in need of relief is to move back into a situation of meeting our own needs as soon as possible. In the ministry with the poor that we are developing, this is a guiding principle. You don't do someone a favor giving them relief on a long term basis when they will not work. Our desire is to come alongside them and help equip them with education, training, and to connect them with opportunity to work. If they refuse to work, we cut off all help. The principle is in **2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 (NKJV)** “¹⁰For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. ¹¹For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. ¹²Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.” R. W. Mackey said, “Under normal conditions, scarcity is the problem and honest work is the solution. Many social activists believe that the solution to most cultural ills is wealth; they believe that a sizable group of people are problem people because they lack wealth. Such individuals often promote programs that give away resources only to find that the resources have been squandered or abused in time. The Scripture teaches, however, that problem people often lack resources because they are foolish, failing to work hard and to manage properly” [John MacArthur, “Think Biblically”, Page 304]. We are called to be a people filled with grace that come alongside those who have repented of sin and work to equip them to be able to meet their basic needs.

C. To Give as God Directs

Ephesians 4:28 (NKJV) “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.” Have you ever thought about one of the purposes of work being to enable us to give to needs in the Body of Christ? We are to work to be able to give to those who are in need of temporary relief and to care for those who cannot work because of physical or mental inability. In addition, we are to work to be able to give to further the advancement of God's work (2 Corinthians 9), and to meet the needs of those who have given themselves full time to the equipping of God's people (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

That is the purpose of work.

IV. The Attitude Toward Work

Our attitude is spelled out in **Colossians 3:23-24 (NIV)** “²³Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, ²⁴since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” This is the attitude that is required in Scripture. To work differently from what is spelled out here is work in an unscriptural manner that is not pleasing to God. What is our attitude in our work?

- Do it with enthusiasm. This is what “with all your heart” means. There is a spirit of thankfulness and a desire to do it well. This begins with a choice. Do your job with all your heart. When you do that, you will find greater satisfaction with your job.
- Do it for the Lord and not men. This one change in a Christians approach to work will transform the way you view your vocation. If our work is sacred as we saw earlier, then it is an offering unto the Lord. We bring Him a shoddy and unworthy offering when we are negative, critical, inefficient, and half-hearted about our work. See your work as an act of service to the Lord.
- Look to the Lord for your reward. That delivers you from becoming bitter when you are treated unfairly, passed over, or denied a raise. Our ultimate reward is from the Lord and He is all knowing and perfectly just.

CONCLUSION

A Biblical worldview involves a Biblical view of work. The solution to long-term poverty is work with the right attitude. The solution to materialism is work with the right attitude. The solution to dissatisfaction and a poor attitude toward work is a Biblical view of work. Let's get to work for the glory of God. (3320)