

Sermons & Presentations

Title: Thank God it's Monday

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What's the worst job you've ever had? Let me tell you a story about a job. I've had a few bad or maybe just hard jobs in my life.

High school grade 11, got a job through school to go and clean a person's home

- Birdman
- Clean the black bathtub
- Bird feces everywhere in the apartment and especially in the kitchen
- Worst job ever

Throughout my life, I have had a lot of different jobs and some jobs I enjoyed more than others. One thing that my friends and I talk about from time to time is the time when we can just retire. Wouldn't it be amazing to be able to stop working and just be free to do whatever we want?

We live for this dream of the future. We talk about freedom 55, getting away from the grind, we have stuff like Thank God it's Friday. Work is something we have to get by, to pay the bills, until we can retire and do what we really want to do. Why does work feel like a curse? Because it is! Is it really a curse? Or can work be a blessing from God?

In the Genesis story when we read about the creation story, we see that God himself works. God works and creates the world. And it's because God works, that we also work.

(SLIDE) This passage comes after 5 days of creation where God creates the universe and the world, and we come to day 6 where God creates humans.

Genesis 1:27-28

27 So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."

Because we are made in the image of God, we are invited to be co-workers with God. Not only do we work with God, we are given the ability to reflect his character in this world. God invites us to be co-creators in this world and so God says, be fruitful and multiply.

Sermons & Presentations

(SLIDE) A question to ask ourselves is did this invitation from God come before the fall or after the fall?

- It was before the fall
- The fall comes later in chapter 3 where work becomes tainted and is under the curse of sin. This means that work itself is not a curse but was intended to be part of God's good creation.
- And in Christ, we are freed from the curse of sin, and we are now free to be able to live and work, where work is now under the blessing of God.

In Christ, even work is reconciled to him. Even work which feels like such a heavy burden and a curse becomes a blessing. See that's good news. Jesus makes even work good!

Work is not just what you get paid for

- What you would spend, the most part of your day doing
- Schooling
- Taking care of children
- Being a homemaker
- Being retired and getting to do what you want! I heard that for some people retirement can be very hard because work has been their whole life.

Another word we can use for work is vocation. - Vocation comes from the Latin word "a call or summons" It's usually an occupation which a person is drawn to which a person is suited for and are good at or trained to do. It is ideal if our work can be our vocation but not necessarily the same thing.

There's a story in Russian Legend, that one day a peasant was found out that he would receive a portion of the land from his master as an inheritance. But there was a strange stipulation put on the will, the will said that the size of the land will depend on how much he can cover in one day of running. He would have to run from the starting point and return to it before the sun went down and he would get that amount of land. So, he was so excited that he trained and worked hard, getting ready for it and when the day came, he ran hard and fast and far and came back with a lot of land. When he got back, the sun still was not set, so he went out again and ran as fast as he could get the most land he could get in that time. He ran back just before the sun was set and he was so happy and exhausted by fell dead. All that work and training he put into something, he couldn't even enjoy. What was the point of that? This is what the teacher says in our passage. he has tried everything in life to find happiness. He has tried finding it in wealth, pleasure, wisdom and they were all meaningless. And here even in his work, he says it's meaningless. You work hard and build something up and you can't even enjoy it. Because in the

Sermons & Presentations

end you will die and what you've worked for someone else will enjoy. Do you ever feel this way? We acquire education, wealth, promotion and yet we are more miserable than before.

(SLIDE) Verse 22

22 What do mortals get from all the toil and strain with which they toil under the sun? 23 For all their days are full of pain, and their work is a vexation; even at night their minds do not rest. This also is vanity.

(SLIDE)

Even at night, you can't find rest. You spend all day working, all week working, waiting for the weekend and even on the weekend, all you think about is work!

So how does abiding in Jesus impact our work? What does it mean for us to be called by Jesus to our vocation?

The first thing about our work or call is that our jobs are not our primary calling. Our vocation, "that call or summons" is to Jesus himself. It's not to our jobs, to our schooling, any other thing or person that takes up most of our day, that first call is to Jesus who calls us to himself.

- In one of teachings in the Catholic Church, they teach this about vocation. (SLIDE) "Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being"
- Because God is love and we are made in his image, loving him and others is our first job. This is why Jesus says the great rule/trellis is to Love God with all that we have and to love others.
- This is our innate vocation.
- But when we are called to Christ, he calls us to be his hands and feet in this world, which includes our work and vocation.

The second point on vocation is that work can become our primary place of discipleship.

Dallas Willard, a professor and writer of spiritual formation who passed away not too long ago says this about work.

(SLIDE)

"To not find your job to be the primary place of discipleship is to automatically exclude a major part, if not the most, of your waking hours from life with him. The good news of Jesus turns your work into a spiritual formation training center."

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Sermons & Presentations

The good of Jesus turns your work into a spiritual formation training center.

See I've never thought about work that way. That work can become a place for spiritual formation. I've always thought that Church was the place, right? But how much hours do you spend at church? 2 hrs here and another few hours mid week. For the most of us, we spend most of our waking hours at work. So, it makes complete sense to me that your place work or vocation, has the potential to being the primary place of discipleship.

We spend so much time at work that to not take God to work with us, is to ignore a huge part of our life with God. (SLIDE)

I wonder whether or not there are people who are not happy at their jobs because they never considered work as vocation. I think we have looked at vocation as something that only people who are going to be pastors or missionaries do that we've degraded and cheapened the call of God to work in His world. This is why it is important for us to ask ourselves the question of what kind of work has God called us to.

When we place Jesus as the Lord of our work, work then becomes a blessing. It makes work holy.

Our call is not to go to work and live our weekdays leaving God at home and then picking him back up for Sundays, our call is following Jesus in every aspect of our lives. This is what it means for us to say Jesus is Lord.

SLIDE

24 There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink and find enjoyment in their toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God; 25 for apart from him who can eat or who can have enjoyment?

Who can enjoy life apart from God? The teacher has realized that even after trying to find happiness in all things including work, that it is only in light of God's call, that we can enjoy life, including our work. He's not arguing for a life of pleasure but rather a way in which to put the ordinary, daily life as part of God's call for us. This is why he says eat and drink and find enjoyment in their toil. Because in Christ, the ordinary part of life is also part of the blessing of God.

Sermons & Presentations

The question “Who can enjoy life apart from God?” sounds like Jesus doesn’t it when he talks about vine and the branches. It is in the same vein as the branch not being fruitful apart from the vine.

So how do we take God to work on Monday? How can we go from Thank God it’s Friday to Thank God it’s monday?

St Benedict had 3 things that his community would focus on. Prayer, Study and Work. There’s a Latin maxim that came from Benedict which is:
(SLIDE) “Laborare Est Orare” with means “To work is to pray.”

Work becomes a form of prayer. It’s not even setting time aside to pray at work but to see the work itself as a form of prayer.

This is in line with what Paul says in Colossians 3:23 Colossians 3:23,
“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord and not for people (or your boss) ...”

Work then can become an act of devotion to God. God has created us to work, so when we work in Christ, it can become a way of praying. I would caution us though that if you have the tendency to overwork, then stopping work would be an act of devotion to God.

What would it mean for you to make work as part of your discipleship to Jesus? How would your work change if it became a way of prayer?

Some of us have jobs that we love and are what we feel as also part of our vocation to serve Christ in this world. For some of us our jobs are just that, a job to pay our bills. For some of us, the traditional form of work is not what we do nor our vocation and it may never be. For some it’s being in school or being retired. But whatever the situation in life you are in, we are called to be in Christ. And because of this, any job, even if it is not something you enjoy, can be a way of praying to God. It is a way of living in step with the Holy Spirit, where even the worst job can be a place of redemption and joy.

How could I have looked at that job of cleaning the black bathtub? Well I was getting paid first of all. But I was also helping someone who was not capable of doing it himself. It could have been a way that I could have been the agent of reconciliation in that moment.

So, what are some liturgies around your work and vocation to make sure that God is part of your work?

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Sermons & Presentations

- One thing I've decided to do is to start my workday with a quick word of prayer
- I usually start my workday with turning my computer on and then making some coffee and then checking my email. And then if I remember, I'll say a little prayer.
- Trying to commit to praying before I touch the computer.
- Another way in which this speaks to me is thinking about the way I work. How am I responding to and treating my coworkers? Or the people that work under me? How am I treating those who I report to? How do I respond to the interruptions to my work?
- For some of us, it may mean leaving work at work and not bringing work home with you. It may mean taking time to rest which we will talk about on another talk...
- For those of us that are retired, how can your experiences and the ways in which God made you reflect God's character in this world? What can you do with your free time to continue be called to love Him and the world you live in?
- For some of us who are students, what would mean for you to study as a form of prayer? Can even school be redeemed?

We are going to end our time together with a commissioning to our vocations. We believe that all of us are called to Jesus to love him and the world. That is our first vocation. We are also uniquely gifted and made and are called to reflect different characteristics of God in our work and vocation. so, we want to go through this time of liturgy where we are sending you out so that we can say Thank God it's Monday. Greg will lead us through this time.