

DAY 1 - (week beginning Mon 15 Oct 2018)**Read - Genesis 1:27-2:3**

“By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.” v 2

Our theme for this week is A Theology of Work. Theology is concerned with the relationship between God and humans and so we will look at how work fits into our relationship with God.

We see in Genesis 1 that, right from the beginning, God was at work in creating the universe as we know it. There are some who feel that work is one of the punishments that arose from the sin in the Garden of Eden and so is something we have to suffer with in our life on earth.

This is clearly not true because God was at work in creation and remains at work in our lives every day. We can also see that God actually instructed Adam and Eve in the work they needed to do. Gen 1:28 God speaks to the first humans: “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

God gives them work to do, and all of this was before the Fall. It is clear from this that, rather than be a punishment for sin, work is actually a command from God and something that He has entrusted us with.

We need to see our earthly work as part of what God wants for us.

Prayer: Father, please help me to be faithful in the earthly work that I do.

DAY 2**Read - Colossians 3:18-25**

“Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.” v 22

Maybe your response to the suggestion that we see our earthly work as part of what God wants for us, was to say “but my work is so dull and meaningless”.

There is a tendency for many folk to see their work as merely a means of earning enough to live and not see it as anything important. God sees all work as important.

Paul showed that in his response to Onesimus – the slave of Philemon. We read about him in the book of Philemon and at the end of Colossians. Onesimus had run away from his master and gone to Paul. Most modern folk would have expected Paul to urge Philemon to let Onesimus go, but he has a different approach.

Paul did not try to change the earthly relationship of slave and master, but rather the attitudes of slave and master to each other. Paul urged Onesimus to be the best slave that he could be and Philemon to be the best master that he could be.

Work is important in making this world function and no matter how meaningless or hard we may find our work, God urges us to be the best we can be in that situation. Our faith should make us better workers!

Prayer: Help me, Lord, to see my work through Your eyes.

DAY 3**Read - Colossians 3:18-25**

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” v 23-24

Paul makes another key point in this passage – we need to do our work with the attitude that we are doing it for the Lord.

Paul is not talking about our work for God (we will get to that later) but the context is clearly earthly work as he is talking about slaves and masters – the most common work relationship in those times.

Our attitude to the work we have to do makes a tremendous difference to both our effectiveness and our personal well-being. Paul encourages us to look at all our earthly work as something that we are doing for God, rather than for our boss or company.

So if our job is to sweep the floor, we sweep it to the best of our ability because God wants it swept. We see our work as part of God’s plan to make this world function properly – we see it as God’s calling on us.

Just that slight change in attitude will not only make us a better worker, but also one who is satisfied with a job done well. We will start to see what we do as God’s holy purpose in our lives.

Work will stop being a drudgery that we just have to live with, and will instead become a blessing.

Prayer: Help me do all for You.

DAY 4

Read - 1 Thessalonians 5:12-15

“Now we ask you, brothers and sisters, to acknowledge those who work hard among you, who care for you in the Lord and who admonish you.” v 12

So we have looked at earthly work and seen that it is all part of God’s plan for us and not a ‘necessary evil’. But there is a second aspect to the theology of work, and that is spiritual work.

Paul urges the Thessalonians to acknowledge and support those who ‘care for you in the Lord’. There are many whose work is primarily to look after the spiritual needs of those around them. In our modern society we are probably more aware of this than they were in Paul’s day.

However, there is more to this comment than just the full-time Christian workers. This is clear in that Paul warns the ‘brothers who are idle’.

Spiritual work is not merely for those are full time workers, God calls all of us to not only work for a living, whether that be earthly or spiritual work, but also to work for His Kingdom. This is working for a purpose and not for a living.

God’s interest in this world is not simply in ‘keeping it going’, His major concern is for His Kingdom to spread across the whole world. That Kingdom requires far more than simply lots of missionaries – there is lots of work that is needed in supporting and encouraging all Christians.

The mission and the support are the purposes of the Church, and we are all part of it.

Prayer: Father please help me to see my place in Your Church.

DAY 5

Read - 1 Corinthians 12:1-30

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” v 4-7

One of the wondrous joys of the Gospel message is that God not only forgives our sins and make us righteous through the death of Christ on the cross, but He also uses all of us in spreading the Gospel to others.

Some are missionaries who evangelise new areas for Christ, but each missionary is supported by the church and that church is supported by the people of that church.

Paul makes it clear in our passage today that God has empowered ‘each’ of us to play some part in God’s work. He not only calls us to play some part, but He also gives us the abilities (gifts) needed to perform that task, through His Spirit at work within us. Whether we feel capable or not is irrelevant because He is capable of doing anything through us if we let Him.

The key phrase is ‘if we let Him’. God does not force us to do anything and we need to take the step out in faith so that God can work through us. This spiritual work is not only praying, teaching or preaching: it is also caring for the poor, supporting others in a home group, helping the services to function as a steward or musician etc.

Prayer: Lord, please show me the spiritual work that You want me to do. Help me to trust You to work through me.

DAY 6

Read - Matthew 25:14-46

“Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” v 21

Jesus tells two important stories in Matthew 25 that both relate to work. In the first story He tells us that God has given us talents and abilities (bags of gold) that need to be used for the work of His Kingdom and not simply buried out of fear.

In the second story (the sheep and the goats) Jesus highlights the importance of doing the work that God has for us to do. It is a matter of significant consequence.

But we need to notice that what the sheep did, and the goats did not do, were not deeply spiritual actions but simple actions that had deep spiritual significance: *“I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”*

These are simple actions that we can all do, no matter how little we may know our Bible, or how weak we may think our faith is. But these actions have very deep spiritual significance for those we serve and for us.

True life can be found here on earth in doing our earthly work ‘as if we are doing it for the Lord’ and in doing our spiritual work as He directs for the ‘common good’. There is life in work!

Prayer: Father please lead me to the work You want me to do.