

# Monday Matters: A Biblical Theology of Work



**Genesis 2:15, Colossians 3:23**

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It has been a really, really tough week. The passing of Casey was unimaginable. It still feels unreal and it has just been a really, really hard week on all of us. I appreciate you guys coming and gathering so that we can be together and mourn together. One of the hard things when it actually happened was how do you then let people know? This is going to be news that will shock everyone. So first, we told the staff, then how do you get it out to you guys? We put an email together and then we thought, well we will have to share it on social media. We shared it on social media, just a simple post, with a picture explaining what happened. For our social media, when you post something, it gets maybe 500-1,000 impressions. Our sermons, the best they have ever done is 10,000 impressions. That post about Casey got over 30,000 engagements. It was unreal and I think that gives a little bit of a testimony of who she was, her life, and her

legacy. Also, the comments; almost 200+ comments on that post alone. It was amazing reading all of those and hearing all of you tell what Casey meant to you.

There were a few themes in all of those messages, one of them was her smile, her kindness, her love, her generosity, but then almost all of you talked in some way about her work. What she did. How she served you. How every time you came to church, she would be the person you talked to first, she would be the person who helped you with whatever problem you had; that was Casey. She was incredible at what she did. She was incredible at her work. It is very fitting that this morning we transition in our sermon series 20/20 to the topic of work because what I want to start out with is the example of Casey. Casey was not a person that worked for herself, for her own glory, just to clock in and get a paycheck. She was someone who worked as a way to love God and serve us. That was Casey, that is what she did, and that is what hopefully, we see this morning when we think about the biblical vision of what work is.

There are a few different ways that you can work. The first way is selfish work. Selfish work is about you and if your work is selfish then you are either going to love your work too much, it is going to become your god, your identity, it will be the thing that motivates everything you do, or you are going to hate it too much. You will despise it. When work is selfish, we love it too much or hate it too much. It becomes a god or becomes something we grieve instead of viewing it as the gift that God gave us. There is another way to work and it is not selfish work, it is servant work.

Servant work sees work as a good gift from God and it sees work as a way to connect to God. Work is actually to be done under God, for the love of God, and the love of our neighbors; that is what work is supposed to be like. You, as a worker, have been created by God to work and it a joy to get to work to love God and to serve others. Before we go to the Scriptures and look at the biblical theology of work, I just want to ask one question. How is your work? Think about the work that you did this week. Think about your attitude towards work. Do you love it too much, or do you hate

it too much? Is it a gift, is it a god, or is it something that you grieve? How do you view work and how are you motivated to work? If there is somebody who notices your work, how do they view your work? Is it lazy? Is it hardly working? Is it just doing the bare minimum, or do they see a person who truly works heartily, as the Scripture will tell us, for the glory of God? We will see that work is actually a big deal to the Lord. I am not just talking about a job because some of you do not have a job where you get paid money, but you are still a worker. You might work in the home, or you may be retired and you might have a whole different kind of work, but all of us in some way have a work that God has given us to do. How are we doing?

I think Casey knocked it out of the park. She was a superhero when it came to work and the reason she was so amazing, the reason she touched all of us with her work is because she did it as an act of worship and witness. She loved God and she loved us with her work. I pray this morning that we would see our work under God's work, and we would see it as both worship and witness. You may be thinking...*this sounds kind of familiar, I think I have heard some of this before.* We actually preached a sermon series two years ago about work and covered basically all we are going to say this morning, so it is going to be a little bit of a rerun, but for me, I love reruns. Reruns are actually my favorite because when I watch a movie or show I usually get the basics. But then when I watch it again for the second, third, tenth, twentieth time, I always get nuances. I always laugh at different moments and that is what I hope it will be for you this morning. For some of you, it is going to be the first time, but for some of you, it is going to be a rerun. So hopefully for the rerun, you get some things you did not get before and you really see what God's vision for work is.

We are going to look at Genesis 2:15 and Colossians 3:23 and we are going to talk about why Monday matters, because the truth is Monday matters, not just today, not just Sunday, not just religious stuff, we are going to see that Monday actually matters greatly to God. As we think

about Monday matters, we are going to see a theology of work from the Scriptures.

## **Scripture**

***"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it."* Genesis 2:15**

***"Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men."* Colossians 3:23**

## **God Works**

What we see from those two Scriptures is that God created us to work. The first thing we see in Genesis is that God works. God actually works. In fact, we are introduced to the God of the Bible, and the very first thing we are told about Him, is that He works. Think about Genesis 1:1. God created the heavens and the earth. Isn't that fascinating? The very first thing we know about God is that God works, that God is a creator, that God does. He works, He fashions, He builds. One of the things I love to do is take my family on hikes through the woods, and one of the reasons I do is because I love to point out God's handiwork. Look at what God did. Look how He fashioned all of this into existence with the word of His mouth. Just look around. Our God creates, and He is a good creator. We see that God works, and not only in Genesis 1:1, but to the end of Genesis 1 we hear all that God has done, how He created the heavens and the earth, the cosmos—everything we see He brought into existence. Genesis 2:2 will tell us "on the seventh day God finished His work and He rested on the seventh day from all the work that He had done." Genesis 1 is described as God's work. God did work; God created. We see that from the Scriptures. So thinking about the theology of work, the first thing we notice is God works. God does. And we see that God not only created the world by His word, but now God is still upholding and providentially caring and working in the world still by His good word.

## God Made Us to Work

The second thing we see is that God made you to work. Not only is God a God who works, a working God, a creator God, a God who does, a God who builds, a God who fashions, a God who creates, but we see that God actually makes us to work. God creates us to work. As we think about the flow of Genesis, Genesis chapter 1, verse 28 says, "And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion'" We talk about this a lot, but He has given them authority. He is saying...*I have built all of this, now you go be builders after me. Now you have dominion, you rule over everything I have made.* Notice what He says, "...subdue it." That word, subdue, means to be violent to it. Why would God tell us to be violent to His creation? In other words, to take raw material and bend, mold, fashion, make into something else. God has created all of this raw material. He knew that by making trees, we would one day cut them down and fashion them into wood to build things with the wood that He gave us, and He wants us to do it under Him. He wants us to do it as a way to care, not to destroy, but to care and to improve on what He has done. He gave us that right and ability to take all that He has made and make it better. Build things. Build culture and civilization and thrive under Him because He stamped you with His image and He has made you to be a worker. He has created you to create. Think about how amazing that is!

Notice the text we read in Genesis chapter 2, verse 15, "The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to keep it." I mean that is so neat. It does not say put him in the garden to just sing songs to God. It does not say put him in the garden to just walk and talk with God. Now, that was all part of it—Adam and Eve would have sung before the Lord, they would have walked and talked and had a relationship with God. All of those things are true, but God also put him there (and we are going to see that He gave Eve to be his helper) to help with the garden work, but He put them there to work. I love what J.D. Greear says, "God did not create Adam and Eve to be park rangers." See, a park ranger does is make sure that nothing changes, to make sure nothing ever happens to the park. God did not make us park rangers; He made us gardeners. What do

gardeners do? They change things. They plant things. They trim things. They pick things. They create things. He put us in the garden to work it and to keep it. To keep it means to guard it with the integrity that God would want it to be guarded. That same word is used for the priest to guard the temple. This garden was a sacred place. Why was it sacred? Because God made it, and He charges Adam and Eve to work it and to keep it. So we see that God works, then we see that God actually made us to work. It is this huge reality that God created us to work. We are to be cultivators of all that God has done.

Now, for most of us, we sort of make a distinction between the type of work that God gives us. We think there is some work that is sacred and there is some work that is secular. In your mind, you either have a sacred job or you have a secular job. Doctor, teacher, carpenter, or computer scientist—those kinds of things are secular things, but the sacred things are pastor, missionary, worship leader, and somehow God really cares more about that type of work. What we have here is a false distinction between sacred and secular work. God put Adam in a garden to do sacred work—to keep it and till it, and to use his hands as an act of worship towards God.

Martin Luther would write extensively on work. Tim Keller wrote a book called Every Good Endeavor, which I encourage you to read. He shows how Luther argued during his time because the Catholic Church set up sacred work and secular work. Sacred is what the priest does, secular is what everybody else does as the common man. Luther, in his writing, would argue there is not secular and sacred work. That all work is sacred because God owns every square inch of the cosmos and anything you do is under Him and for Him and should be seen as an act of worship to Him and love for your neighbor. All work is dignified. All work is sacred. No matter what you do, you are doing it to the Lord, and that is why Paul, in both Ephesians and Colossians, would talk about working not just for man, but to the Lord. No matter what you do, if you are sweeping a floor or doing heart surgery, you are doing it to the Lord. It is an act of worship. It is an act of witness to your neighbor.

## **God Works through Our Work**

I love the uses of Scripture that Luther used to talk about this divide of secular and sacred, how everything is God's way to care for the world. So our third thought is that God works through your work. I am going to give you two passages that Luther used to explain how God works through your work. The first is Psalm 145:15–17, "The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His works." Think about that for a minute. It starts with "the eyes of all look to you." Who is that? It is, of course, God. Everything looks to God. You and I look to God to satisfy our needs and what the writer says is the Lord gives them their food in due season. He satisfies their hearts and they praise His works. The psalmist is praising the work of God because God is the one who feeds the entire world. Luther would ask the question how does this actually happen? How does God feed the whole world? God does it through our work. God feeds the world through farmers. What do farmers do? Farmers grow crops. Farmers grow food. But the farmer does not deliver the food straight to people. No, usually, there is a whole process of buyers and sellers of the grain, and the food, and the meats. Then it goes into processors who process the different varieties of food. Then it goes through delivery services that deliver it all throughout the country and the world and then it goes into groceries. It goes through a whole system. You also have the FDA and all these different resources that guard the integrity of our food. Finally, it goes to you as a consumer, going in and buying food, and going through the line and checking it out. It also might go into a restaurant where a chef or a cook, and a waiter or waitress, and all these different people are involved. In this text, God feeds the world, how? It is through laborers and through workers. If you are involved in any part of the food industry, you are being the hands of God as He feeds the entire world. It is not just a job; it is a sacred calling. You are able to do something grand. Yes, pastors feed souls, but farmers feed bodies and both are important to God because God is caring for His creation through the labor of His people.

Another Psalm Luther would use is Psalm 147:12–14, “Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem! Praise your God, O Zion! For He strengthens the bars of your gates; He blesses your children within you. He makes peace in your borders; He fills you with the finest wheat.” So, the question is who does all these things? Well, the psalmist is very clear—God does all of these things. This is God who strengthens the bars of the gates. This is God who makes peace at the borders. This is God who feeds you with the finest wheat. Then, of course, the question has to be asked; how does God do this? It does not just happen. How does God strengthen the bars of the gates? He does so through engineers, laborers, and architects. These people are mixing concrete, with hammers and sledges. He is building the bars of the gates; He is strengthening their borders through the labor of laborers who are working and doing. How does God bring peace among the borders? He does that through government and through officials who are making decrees and meeting with other people to act and to give instruction. He is doing these things through people. How do they get the wheat? It is again through the farmer and all the people who are involved in the food industry. In other words, God is doing this. It is His work, but He does it through our work. It is an amazing thing to think that as you go to work tomorrow, or as you are at home tomorrow doing your work, whatever you do, whatever your hands touch, God is caring for the world. As you are trimming a bush, God is caring for the world through your trimming. As you mow your yard, God is keeping the providence of the world going through the cutting of grass. Everything you do, you can do it to the glory of God. You can see your work as an act of worship because as you work God works through you.

- **For a Purpose**

We see in the Scriptures that we were actually made to work. We were made to have purpose. We were made to do things. That is why when we talk about COVID-19 and we talk about shutting things down, it is not just scary for the economy, it is also scary for humanity because human beings we were not made to just stay in our houses. We were made to conquer, subdue, and care for all around us. Sometimes yes, we have to take extreme measures, but we see it is not just scary for the economy it is scary for us as humans because we were made to have purpose and



dignity in our work. We were made to do, and that is why Barry Schwartz, a psychologist on a Ted Talk said, "All people need to feel valued at work and believe their work actually matters." This is a psychologist. This has nothing to do with religion. He says there is something about work that people actually need it, they need to feel valued, and they need to know their work matters. As a Christian, how could you know any less that your work matters? You are working under God, for God, and to serve your neighbor through your work. Talk about having dignified work, talk about finding purpose in everything you do. You are doing it to God and you are doing it for the good of your neighbor. We were made for this. We were made to see and do good work.

- **Redeemed for Good Works**

The next thing we see is that God not only created us to work, but he actually redeems us for good works. Think about Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10, "For we are all His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Think about that, that is redemption! God saves us, and He remakes us in Jesus so that we would do good work and so that we would bear the fruit of the Spirit. But He also says that there is work actually prepared before for us to do. That is actually doing something. That is doing a work that effects people and that leverages the mission of the Lord. You have been not only created for work, but redeemed to see your work differently, to live out a life about good work for the glory of God, and to serve your neighbor. That is what you get to do as a believer.

Just think about this for a moment, have you ever thought about how your work can answer prayers? Your work can actually answer prayers! Think about in the Lord's Prayer. What does the Lord ask us to pray? "Give us this day our daily bread." How does that prayer get answered? It gets answered by the work and labor of people. All of those people who work in the food industry are bringing about that answered prayer when someone prays for the Lord to give them their daily prayer. The Lord answers that prayer through a series of workers and people. When someone prays for healing, what usually takes place is that a series of doctors, nurses, hospitals, a whole medical industry plays a part in answering that specific

prayer. How does God usually heal? Sometimes He supernaturally heals through a miracle, but how does God usually heal? He heals through the providence of doctors, nurses, hospitals, medicine, and pharmacists—that is how God normally answers the prayer of healing. Your work can actually be connected to the prayers of God's people. When somebody prays to the Lord, it is often through our work that God uses to actually heal and provide for people.

### **Love God and Neighbor through Work**

The last thing we are going to see is this, that your work and hopefully you already have got this, but your work is a way to love God and serve your neighbor. Think about your work. Today is Sunday so you came to church, you have done something that matters, you worshiped the Lord, and you know this is what God wants you to do—but think about tomorrow. Why does Monday matter? Monday matters because God cares about your work too because God sees work as worship. Your Monday is a chance for you to worship the Lord and serve your neighbor. Think about the greatest command to love God and to love your neighbor. How do you practically do that? How do you practically love God and love your neighbor? There are different ways to do that, but one practical way to do that is by working. Work is a way that you can actually love God and love your neighbor. How is that? It is because God made you to work. He has providentially cared for the world through your work, so as you work, you are working under God, for God. You are carrying out His will through the work that you do, but also you are loving other people because your work, at the end of the day, is a service to others. Others need what you do. And as you do what you do, you are caring for the needs of others. Do not see your work as selfish; just putting in some hours and getting a paycheck so you can go buy more stuff while hating every moment at work because at work you think it's only about you. That is not a biblical view of work. No...at work, you are there primarily for God, for God's glory.

Secondly, you are there to serve your neighbor, to use your time, your talents, and your abilities to render services to other people to help the needs around you. Notice what it says in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 7. In

the context of work, Paul would say it is rendering service with a good will as to the Lord, not to man. Here, work is the idea of rendering service. What are you doing? You are rendering service. Your work is a way to do something that is going to affect someone else. Paul is saying don't do it for men, that would be just rendering a service to get applause, to get a paycheck, to get a benefit. You are not doing it primarily for man; you are first of all doing it to the Lord. First, to the Lord as a worship act, you are rendering this service. If you are a teacher teaching kids, why do (should) you do it? It is not just to get a paycheck. No, you are teaching kids first because God wants children to be taught, so you are teaching these kids for the glory of God, and the way you do it is going to be glorifying to God. So first of all, your work is an act of worship, teaching kids for the glory of God. You are not just teaching them for their sake, you are doing it primarily for God's sake. But in teaching, what are you doing? You are benefitting these children because these children are image bearers of God who need to learn and grow. You love God through your teaching, but you also love these kids through your teaching and you serve them through your teaching. Whatever you do, if you are in a plant, if you are in a kitchen, if you are building houses, if you are paving roads, if you are putting wires together, whatever you do, see it as rendering service. Somebody is going to benefit from what you do. Somebody needs what I do. You are going to render this service with a good will because you know this is what God wants you to do and someone is going to benefit from it.

### **Heartily to the Lord**

That is what Paul would speak, not just of the home, not just of the church, but he would talk about our work. In his letters to the church, he talks about our work, and next we are going to dig in a little more about what that means. The verse we read in Colossians, notice again what it says, "Whatever you do work heartily as for the Lord and not for men." It is the idea that as you work it should be from your heart. I love those words, "work heartily." Does that describe your work? I am not just talking about when you are clocked in on the job, but all of your work. When you are at home and you are caring for your house, when you are caring for your children. Anything that is sweat and toil, anything that you are doing

would be work. Sometimes you are behind the computer, or out in the yard, or driving down the road, but you are doing work. Is it with your heart? Are you doing it heartily, or are you doing it hardly? Doing it hardly would be not seeing your work in connection to God and thinking or saying...*I am going to hardly work, do the bare minimum. I am just going to do enough so I do not get fired. I am just going to do enough to survive. I am just going to do enough to squeak by.* Do you do it heartily? Do you go all in? Do you work in such a way that your work is worship to God? If it is, it will be a witness to those around you. Other people will say, "Why do you work so hard?" "Why are you doing this with a smile on your face?" "Why are you cheerful about Monday and Tuesday?" "The only thing I am cheerful for is Friday afternoon, how can you have excitement on Wednesday?" You are halfway through the grind, but you are smiling because you see your work differently. Your work is sacred. God put you in a garden to work it, till it, and keep it. It is your garden; it is your lot. It is what the Lord has landed for you to do right now during this time. You might not be in your dream job, but you are in a job right now that God has you in. So, what do you do? You work heartily to the Lord and not to men.

How do we do this? I think one particular way is to connect your work to the 'why.' Why? It is because what you do matters—whatever you do, wherever you are at. Sometimes it is hard to see the why, see the product, see what actually happens, to see the effect of your work. If you are at Culver's back in the kitchen flipping burgers, it is really hard to see why that matters. You want to think...*All I am doing is clocking in, flipping burgers. It is just a grind and I just want to clock out, pick up my paycheck, and go home because the only reason I am here is for the money. I am just here to get somewhere else.* But what if you connected your work to why it matters. Imagine as you are flipping burgers, in order to work heartily, in order to find joy in that, you instead think...*Ok, how can I do this in a way that worships God and in a way that really serves my neighbor?* You begin to connect the dots of what exactly you are doing. In reality, what you are doing effects that minivan in the drive thru. In that drive thru, there is a minivan with a mom, dad, and some kids that just

came from somewhere or going somewhere, and for whatever reason they were not able to go home and fix a meal, so this is their meal together. It is going to be consumed in a car and they are going to be passing sacks back to little kids. Those kids are going to open up a sack, reach in, and pull out a burger that you cooked, that you crafted, that you created. When you connect the dots to why it matters, you want the car ride to go well. You don't want the little kid in the back to start screaming, "There are pickles on this and I did not order pickles!" So what should you do? You notice the order. You do it with all your heart. You make sure the order is correct so that there is peace and harmony as the family leaves so they can enjoy wherever they are going and wherever they came from. You get to feed their bellies. You get to help make their day just a little bit better.

When you are back in the kitchen thinking about that minivan or the table outside where a family is going to come and maybe have the first conversations they have had all day, you get to cook that burger. What does it do? It makes your job meaningful now. Now you are not just flipping a burger, you are serving people. You are loving your neighbor and you are loving God. Now, you do it with your heart. Now, you have a smile on your face, and the person beside me says, "Why are you so happy?" Not only is my work now worship, it is also witness. I get to tell my buddy why I am so happy—because I am flipping this burger for the glory of God. This is the Lord's work that He has given me to do and I get the opportunity to serve my neighbor through it. That is what I get to do because the Lord has created me to work. He has given me work to do, and my work is actually accomplishing His work. As I work, I am going to do it for the love of God and for the good of my neighbor.

The reason so many of us commented about Casey's work is because that is how Casey worked. Casey worked as an act of worship and witness. She worked first and foremost because she loved her God through her work and she saw everything she did behind that desk and everywhere she went as a way to serve and love us. Casey did not thank God for Fridays. No, Casey thanked God for Mondays, because Monday was the day that she could take her place and do her work to the glory of God and the good of

her neighbor. Under Casey's example, under the Scripture that we have seen, let's see Monday differently because Monday actually matters to God. It is not just something to get through; it is something to worship through, to witness through, and to serve the people around us. Doing what God created us to do for His glory and for the good of our neighbors. Tomorrow is Monday, let's not dread through it. Instead, let's charge it. Let's be excited about whatever God has given us to do because today is not the only worship day. No, Monday is actually a sacred day of worship because Monday you get to do the thing God has for you to do for His glory and for the good of your neighbor. Tomorrow, let's get to work for God's glory and for the good of others.