

# Work

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's hear the word of God. And God said, Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds, the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind.

And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds.

And God saw that it was good. Then God said, Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea, and birds in the sky, over the livestock, and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

So God created mankind in His own image. In the image of God, He created them. Male and female, He created them. God blessed them and said to them, 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. Then God said, I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth, and every tree that has fruit with seed in it.

[ 1 : 21 ] They will be yours for food. And to all the beasts of the earth, and all the birds in the sky, and all the creatures that move along the ground, everything that has the breath of life in it, I give every green plant for food.

And it was so. God saw all that He had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, when I studied in my seminary in Jakarta, I remember once a lecturer taught us that there are four big questions in our lives that each of us needs to answer.

There are four big life questions. The first one is about the object of our worship. Who is it that we worship? Everyone must have an object of the worship, whether it is God, or money, or ourselves. There should be object that we worship. Who is it? The second one is, how do we live our lives? Our answer to the first question will determine how we live our lives.

[ 2 : 34 ] Then the third one is, whom will we spend our lives with? This is about choosing a spouse. If he or she is not the right one, then we might suffer for the rest of our lives.

So this is a very important question. And the fourth question is, what are we going to do in our lives? This is about our job. This evening, I will address this fourth question.

How should we view our work? What does the Bible say about it? I want to start this evening with a story about three bricklayers.

Maybe you are familiar with this. A traveler came upon three men working. He asked the first man what he was doing. And the man said he was laying bricks.

Then the traveler asked, why are you doing this job? The man said, of course, to make money. What else? Oh, I see.

[ 3 : 42 ] Then the traveler asked the second man with the same question. What are you doing? Oh, I'm laying bricks. And then he asked the same, another question.

Why are you doing this? Then the second man said, because I like this job. This is my expertise. I heard that we are building a church and it will be the most beautiful church in town.

I just take a small part, but I'm proud of it. Oh, I see. That's wonderful. Then the traveler asked the third man the same question.

He gave the same answer. What are you doing? I'm laying bricks. But when the traveler asked, why question? Why are you doing this?

He said like this, we are building a church and I pray that the people in this town will come to this church and worship the Lord together.

[ 4 : 48 ] So these three men with the same job, same activity, but different attitudes. If I ask you, what's the difference among them?

For myself, I will conclude that the first man worked for money. The second man worked for himself, for his self-actualization.

And the third bricklayer worked for God. Now, how does the Bible view the job that we do? We have already read from Genesis chapter 1, especially verse 26 and 27.

Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock, and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

So there are two great tasks God gave to the humankind, to multiply and fill the earth, and to rule over God's creation, or subdue the earth.

[ 5 : 59 ] It is important to note that it is the second task that makes humans unique. If God only gave one task, the first task, that is just to increase in number, then humans are not different from animals.

I would like to read from the verse 21 and 22 from Genesis chapter 1. So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it according to their kinds and every winged bird according to its kind.

And God saw that it was good. And look at verse 22. God blessed them and said, Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas and let the birds increase on the earth.

So dominion over the creation is what makes humans special. Based on the story of creation, how we as Christians should view our job?

I want to emphasize one point this evening. That job is a call from God. Every work is a call from God. It is one aspect of being a human, of being God's image.

[ 7 : 18 ] Many people in this world do not like going to work. You might be familiar with the phrase, I hate Mondays. I don't like Mondays. For many people, weekend is so enjoyable that Monday is seen to rob the fun or the enjoyment.

Then why do people still go to work on Monday if it's not fun? Of course, because of money. If money comes from heaven, then I will stop working. Or I will do that as a hobby.

No wonder nowadays, some best-selling books sell an idea of how to get more money with less work. If you can get more money with less work, then it will be great.

In my country, multi-level marketing is still very popular. How to invest money? The idea is, don't work for money.

Make it work for you. Ah, it's beautiful, eh? Don't work for money. Make it work for you. But I want to remind us that behind this idea, we can identify a concept that job is a curse.

[ 8 : 34 ] Job is torturing. Avoid it if you can. And this belief is not biblical. The passage that we have read in Genesis reminds us that working is God's command.

He's calling for us a part of being a human. And then we can see how Adam's sons responded to this call. If we skip several chapters to Genesis chapter 4, verse 2 said, Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil.

So here we can see Abel became a shepherd, while Cain became a farmer. They fulfilled their role to serve God as his vice regents over creation.

And so we are called to do the same role. In the ancient Near East, a king would set up statues of himself across the land to manifest his sovereignty over his kingdom.

In reading that man is the image of God, Moses' original audience would have understood that as they reproduce and fill the earth, they would be representing the sovereign creator to his creation.

[ 9 : 56 ] Subduing the earth or having dominion over it does not mean exploiting it, but nurturing and protecting it, caring for it. A theologian wrote that work is part of God's loving plan.

We are called to cultivate and care for all the goods of creation. So I want to emphasize again this point. All kinds of good job can be a calling from God.

Whether you are a businessman, a teacher, a scientist, a cleaner, all kinds of good job can be a calling from God. Some people may think that only pastors or church ministers who are called by God.

In some contexts, especially in my own country, if people ask me, why do you want to become a pastor? I should say, it's God's call for me. I cannot say, it's a hobby.

It's my, I love to be a pastor. No, it should be God's call. It should be a good answer. But then, many Christians still think that apart from being church ministers, other jobs are nothing to do with God's call.

[11:15] No, we should remember that doing our job, any kind of good job, is one way to serve God. This includes being a mother or a housewife.

You know, William Tyndale, William Tyndale is an English scholar who became a leading figure in the Protestant Reformation. he once wrote, this is William Tyndale, if we look externally, there is difference between washing dishes and preaching the word of God.

But as touching to please God, there is no difference at all. That's biblical view of work, that there's no difference when done to the honor of the Lord between preaching and washing dishes.

So, this is what should be biblical view. We understand that being a housewife or a mother is not easy. Once, my wife told me that she has a friend who found raising little children frustrating.

She couldn't stand yelling at them again and again. She had promised to herself, I don't want to yell at my kids, but it doesn't work.

[12:32] She felt that it seems easier for her to become a missionary to other parts of the world than being patient to her own small children. Being a mother does not get paid.

There's no promotion for mothers. But if you happen to be one, that is God's call for you. So is the image of God, we should find our own vocation.

Then the problem is, why cannot we view our job this way? Why do people still say that they hate Mondays? We know the answer from the Bible.

It's because of the curse of sin. I want to read to you Genesis chapter 3 verse 17 to 19.

This is the story after the fall. Then God said to Adam, Genesis chapter 3 verse 17 the second part, Cursed is the ground because of you.

[13:38] Through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thissers for you and you will eat the plants of the field.

By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground since from it you were taken. For thus you are and to thus you will return.

So we can see that after the fall work was not a blessing anymore. If people hate Mondays it's because painful toil, thorns and thistles, sweat of your brow have become part of people's daily experience when they work.

but more than the painful toil people who are outside of Christ have also lost the meaning of work. God is the one who gives humans the call to work and in this call lies the purpose the joy and the blessing.

But when people reject God then they don't know why they have to work. They lose the original purpose and the blessing. Now if people do not work to respond to God's call then what is their motivation?

[14:57] I believe there are at least some ways of how people view their job as a consequence of the fall. Let's back to our story of the three big layers.

You remember that the first man works only for money. I believe that for many people what motivates them to work is to get money. Money and money.

I did not say that working to get some money is not biblical. Don't get me wrong. Paul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 3 chapter 10 that the one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.

The problem is not money itself but when money becomes the focus of their lives. What Bible calls the love of money. We know the saying time is money.

All is about money. These people believe that money can buy anything they want including happiness. Then they teach this belief to their children since they first go to school at least in my culture.

[16:08] So when we ask parents why do we have to go to school every day? Then the parents will teach us so that when you grow up you can work and make some money or make a lot of money and live a good life.

That's it. Then these children when they grow up they focus on money in taking all important decisions in life which subject to take when they want to study which company or institution to work with all depends on how much money that they will or can get in return.

But let us be careful with this belief. What does Bible say? The Bible say about the danger of the love of money. I believe that you are familiar with this.

Paul again wrote in the first Timothy chapter 6 verse 10 for the love of money is the root of evil. The love of money is the root of evil.

Instead of bringing happiness the love of money bring destruction to the world bring destruction to the human relationships. Because of money people don't care about God's creation.

[ 17 : 24 ] They can exploit the earth. They don't care about other people. Other people are just viewed as a means to get more money and more profit.

That's the first view. The second view as a consequence of the fall is working to pursue self-glory. For those who like their job so much money might not tempt them.

These people are passionate with their job achieve many things and do their job excellently. It's like the view of the second bricklayer in our story.

But then they are not satisfied with just being excellent. They might become thirst for praise and admiration from other people. Our world adores the greatest, the fastest, the strongest, the best, and the otherest.

For some people, work is like an arena where they compete with others and makes effort so hard to defeat their rivals and to be number one, to prove themselves.

[ 18 : 39 ] When they find someone else is better than them, they feel so envious and so resentful. I believe this is what Apostle John called in 1 John 2 as pride of life.

When we pursue self-glory in anything we do. These ways of viewing work is also dangerous because people who seek after approval and admiration from others would easily feel envious toward those who are better or more successful than them.

And the Bible also says something about this feeling of envy. This is my favorite verse from Ecclesiastes chapter 4 verse 4. It's very easy. Ecclesiastes chapter 4 verse 4.

It is said, And I saw that all toil and all achievement spring from one person's envy of another.

This too is meaningless. A chasing after the win. It's interesting for me. I used to believe and I heard from one great preacher that envy has a negative side and has a positive side.

[ 19 : 57 ] The negative side is that envy can make us hate our rivals and want to harm them. But it also has a positive side. It can push ourselves to the limit to learn more skills and to be as good or even better than our rivals.

However, the Bible says differently. Envy is meaningless. Brothers and sisters in Christ, do we still view work only as a means to make money or to get others' approval?

There was one person in the Bible who had it all, but he was not happy at all. I want to read the last passage for us this evening, again, from Ecclesiastes chapter 2.

Ecclesiastes is believed to be written by King Solomon, and we can believe that it might be his own experience. Ecclesiastes chapter 2 verse 4 to 11.

I will read this passage for you. I undertook great projects. I built houses for myself and planted vineyards.

[ 21 : 12 ] I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. I made a service to water growth of flourishing trees.

I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also own more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me.

I gathered silver and gold for myself and the treasure of kings and provinces. He's very wealthy. I acquired male and female singers and had them as well.

the delights of a man's heart. I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this, my wisdom stayed with me.

And then chapter, verse 10, I denied I denied myself nothing, my eyes desired. I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil.

[ 22 : 20 ] And then comes verse 11, one. Yet, when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless.

A chasing after the wind, nothing was gained under the sun. Let us not try to find happiness and satisfaction in wealth, in pleasure, or fame.

King Solomon had them all, but he said they were meaningless. That's why Jesus Christ came and saved us, so that we can be delivered from the curse of sin, and gave us a meaningful and abundant life.

Our happiness does not depend on wealth or pleasure, but on our relationship with God. God in Christ has loved us and accepted us just as the way we are.

there is nothing we should prove. Furthermore, God's salvation has enabled us to live as God's image. We are enabled to recover the joy and meaning of our work as God's call for us.

[ 23 : 35 ] Let's bear this in mind, and tomorrow when we wake up in the morning, let us remember that we are God's representative in subduing this earth by doing our job.

Not for the love of money, nor for the glory of ourselves, but for the glory of God. Hmm. And remember, of maybe do nothing for the Lord, what I I ever