

God At Work, Part 2

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[0:00] Recently, I came across a song. It's actually, I've heard this song many times. You may have heard this song too.

It gets at something. The title of the song is called Stressed Out by 21 Pilots. I was told when I get older, all my fears would shrink.

But now I'm insecure and I care what people think. My name's Blurryface. It's an identity claim. And I care what you think. My name's Blurryface and I care what you think. Wish we could turn back time to the good old days when our mama sang us to sleep, but now we're stressed out.

Wish we could turn back time to the good old days when our mama sang us to sleep, but now we're stressed out. We're all stressed out. You know what it means to be stressed out.

[1:04] Maybe you're a student. You know what it means to be stressed out. Maybe you're a teacher of students. You know what it means to be stressed out. Maybe you're a manager of some kind of manufacturing enterprise in town.

You know what it means to be stressed out. Maybe you're working the line at that manufacturing establishment. You know what it means to be stressed out. Maybe you're a doctor or a nurse, or maybe you have a responsibility at Kenosha Medical Center to do some kind of housekeeping. You know what it means to be stressed out at work. There's something in our hearts that can identify with a song.

We wish we could turn back time to the good old days in the garden. When not our mama sang us to sleep, but our God sang us to sleep.

But now we're stressed out. We used to dream of outer space, but now they're laughing at our face saying, wake up, you need to make money.

[2:13] We've got a problem with our work, brothers and sisters. Last week I started telling you that we have essentially cut God out of our vocations, and what we need to do is we need to reintegrate God into everything that we do.

Whether that's school, or whether that's where you put your time and you get paid for, or where you volunteer, your mom, your dad, your husband, your wife, your sibling, your son or a daughter, everything that we've been called to, whether that's in a workplace, in a home, in our church, in our community, we need to reintegrate God back into all that we do.

Last week I pointed you to two things from Genesis chapter 1. That God, at work in his creation making, was sovereign, all-powerful. He would say, let it be, and then it was so, and then six times. Do you remember? Oh, this is good. Oh, that's good. Good. Good. Good. Very good. I edged my lawn on Monday, and I said, that's good. And it's out of that goodness, God's desire to bless the inhabitants of the earth, it's out of that goodness on day six, God, in his creation making, gives the creation mandate to image bearers, and we alone, of all of God's creation, are image bearers. We bear God's likeness. We are his representatives on earth to carry out his work of blessing, and we are to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, put the kibosh on it, subdue it for his purposes, and then have dominion over it, manage it to that end.

[3:59] Amen. But now we're stressed out. What happened? What happened?

What happened to work? Well, this morning, we're going to learn what's gone wrong with work. Have you ever asked the question, why is it that I put so much time into this one thing, and this one thing lasts for a moment, and then I'm back to the grind?

Anybody experience anything like that before? I see that hand. This morning, in order to see what went wrong with work, we're going to go back to the garden, the Garden of Eden, in Genesis 2 and

3.

In order for you to reintegrate God back into our entire lives, including our work, we got to first see how God got dissed, disintegrated from our lives and our work.

So this morning, I'm going to very simply point you to two things. God is the giver of all good work. We're going to see that in Genesis 2. I mean, it's he that said on the sixth day, oh, this is very good, of our work.

[5:18] And then the second point I want you to see is that sin has corrupted the goodness of our work because sin has corrupted the core of who we are.

That's Genesis chapter 3. We go from the garden pristine to the garden as a crime scene. In order to understand the problem, and understand the solution, you got to first understand the problem. So would you turn in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 2 if you're not there already? I'm going to move us quickly through it, make a point, and then jump to Genesis 3. God is the giver of all good work. As you're turning in your Bible to Genesis chapter 2, I just want to help you think about Genesis 2 in relationship to Genesis 1. Genesis 1 is a panorama of God's creation making. It is laid out in seven days, and that seventh day shows up in the first three verses of chapter 2. And what it is, it's a big sweep of God's creation making, His good work in creation.

[6:29] And so what Genesis chapter 2 is, is Moses coming in for a close-up on day 6. He slows it down so that we can actually see God at work creating man and woman in the garden at peace with each other and with God.

In verse 4, we read, these are the generations of heaven and earth. And what you need to know about these, the generations, these are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were made, that little phrase, these are the generations, that's repeated throughout the book of Genesis.

Genesis. And what it is, is a way of structuring the book in order for us to understand this outworking of God's blessing to all people from one generation to the next.

And it's going to culminate in an offspring of Eve in whom all the nations of the world will be blessed. And you already know His name. His name is Jesus.

In verses 5 through 9, what we see going on there is God busy at work. In verse 5, there is no one to work the ground.

[7:46] Now, for an astute Bible student, what you find yourself asking are questions like this. Is this the first time that the word work showed up in my Bible?

Because that would be really interesting. It turns out it's not. The first time the word work shows up in your Bible is at the beginning of Genesis 2 in verse 2.

When God takes a break from His work. God is a working God. And so the connection that's being made here is that God is a working God in creation.

And on day 6, He's looking to bless the world through His creation. And now He's looking for someone in His image to do the work for Him. To represent Him.

So we got a need. He's got a need of a worker. Help wanted. And in verse 7, God forms man from the dust, breathing life into Him.

[8:47] And He becomes a living creature. That's why we can call each other creatures. We're all creatures. God is the creator and we're distinct from Him in that we've been made. Creatures.

He gives us our very breath. Verse 8, After creating the man, the Lord God plants a garden in Eden and it's in the east.

Now if you're wondering what is that a reference to, remember that the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, were given to a people, God's people, the Jews, who were in Canaan at the time. And so the east is a reference of being east of Canaan. But what you need to notice is He put the man in the garden and one would think that God would make the garden first and then put the man in the garden, but God makes the gardener first and after that makes the garden and puts him in it. Why would He do that? Because God built the garden around them. He's like a tailor. He tailored the goodness of the garden for Adam, for Eve, and for him.

[10:04] Because this was going to be the dwelling place of God with His people. Verse 9, Out of the ground, the Lord God causes all these trees to spring up.

And if you read it carefully, you read that they were pleasant to the eyes and they were full of fruit. And so they're beautiful and bountiful. It was a picture of delightful abundance.

And what you notice too in verse 9 is that there are two particular trees that God plants in the middle of the garden, right in the middle of it all. The first is the tree of life and we learn from later in Genesis 3, 22 that by eating of this fruit, one lives forever.

God provides eternal life through this tree. This same tree shows up in Revelation 22 in the New Jerusalem, bearing fruit every month for all the inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, all of the redeemed to partake of and live forever in God's presence, in His place, with His people.

But there's another tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And God intentionally plants both trees next to each other.

[11:18] And for our purposes right now, the way to think of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is think about it as representative of God's law. There is going to be a prohibition to this eating of this tree.

And so right next to each other in the middle of the garden is God's, the source of life and law for Adam and Eve in God's presence.

It's all by design. In verses 10 through 14, we learn more very interesting details of features of the garden.

It's got all these rivers going through it. It's well watered. There's all this gold in it, precious gems. If you were looking for a place to live, you'd be like, I'm moving to Eden.

But do you realize that all these features, water, a river, gold, precious jewels. Do you know where else those show up? The new Jerusalem.

[12:24] In addition to the tree of life, in addition to the throne in the new Jerusalem represents God's reign and law. There is rivers, there is gold, there is precious stones.

And once you realize that this garden, this place that God is creating around Adam, it's a place in which he will dwell with Adam and Eve. Now you've probably got a clock going on in your mind right now and you're like, Mike, I thought this was going to be a sermon on work.

And in verse 15, Moses picks up where he left off in verse 8, the Lord God takes the man and puts him in this amazing place of this garden to work it and to keep it.

To till the soil and to guard the garden. This was a gardener slash guard of the garden.

What you need to see here is from the very beginning, work is not a result of the fall. Work is a good gift given by God before the fall.

[13:42] It is a holy occupation. And not only that, the law was given before the fall as well. God commands in verses 16 and 17 that the man not eat of that second tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

And John Stott very helpfully points out three things in verses 16 and 17 and 18. God gave Adam permission to eat of every tree in the garden, including the tree of life.

And in verse 17, God puts a prohibition on eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It's the only prohibition in the garden. And what God is prohibiting right there and what this tree, you've got to think of, representing is moral independence from God.

Moral autonomy. What this tree represents and the command not to eat from it is don't disregard my commands, Adam. Don't decide for yourself what is good and right in your eyes.

It represents law. And not only is there a prohibition, there's a penalty. In the day that you should have eaten of it, you shall surely die.

[15:06] And so as we're walking out of this paradise right now, what you need to realize, it's amazing place. There's work to be done and God's law is there too.

We are to live, Adam and Eve, we're to live under God's reign in the garden. Freedom is not an absence of restraints or limits, but the very presence of them.

God isn't done creating. There's one more piece of creative work he wants to do in 18 through 25. He creates a helper fit for the man and after creating this woman, he gives her to the man.

In verses 22 through 25, it's the first wedding ever recorded and God gives the bride away. And so what we see happening is Eve joined Adam in the garden to fulfill the creation mandate of being fruitful, multiplying, filling, subduing, having dominion over to bless all the inhabitants of the earth. So here's the point. The Lord is the giver of all good things and he's the giver of work. Work was originally good.

[16:28] And so if you're like, if you want to throw work under the bus, don't. Work was good originally. It was an experience of minimum effort for maximum result.

There was no toil, no resistance, no sweat, no hardship, no drama. It was complete and utter goodness on multiple levels that was uninterrupted, no problems.

this is what was originally meant for us to experience in God's presence and in his place with his people full and uninterrupted peace with God and others in our work.

And so if you're a student and you're going to Eden High School before the fall, you would love school. and it would come to you without toil.

If you were a nurse or a doctor serving at Eden Medical Center, you'd come home and your feet would not hurt and your spouse would say, hey, how you doing today? And you'd say, I'm great.

[17:43] I'm ready to put another eight hours in. Nothing but peace in families, nothing but peace in churches, nothing but peace in nations before the fall.

So what happened? Because certainly that's not our experience now. In fact, I'm guessing that some of you in this room have this deep longing.

You long like something like this. Oh man, I just, can't I just have like three hours of extended goodness and peace in my life? Why is this so hard?

Why is fulfilling my responsibilities so hard? And that's where we turn to point two. Sin has corrupted the goodness of our work because sin has corrupted the core of who we are.

If Genesis 2 is the garden pristine, Genesis 3 is the garden as a crime scene. Here we have CSI, Eden.

[18:54] Crime scene investigation, there's a crime, there's a trial, there's a sentence, and there's a judgment. In chapter 3, verses 1 through 7, the crime.

The serpent comes on the scene and he appeals to Eve, the woman, and questions God's very words.

Did God actually say you should not eat of any tree of the garden? And we all know that God actually permitted Adam to eat of every tree in the garden but one.

But in verse 3 of chapter 3, the woman who seeks to correct the serpent, she starts to kind of reveal that she might not have this firm grip on what God has actually said because she starts to add to what God says.

In addition to not eating of it, she says, and we may not touch of it, God didn't say that. And then she also adds, lest you die, which is a softening of on that day you will surely die.

[19:58] So it doesn't seem like she has a firm grip on what God has actually said. And the serpent jumps on it. In verse 4, he blatantly denies what God has said.

You will not surely die. It's a complete lie. And furthermore, the serpent goes on to start to question God's goodness.

If you look at verse 4, we read this. verse 5, but the serpent said to the woman, you shall not surely die. Verse 5, for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened and you'll be like God, knowing good and evil.

The serpent very craftily is saying, hey, God's withholding something good from you. There's an area of being like him that he's not allowing you to be like.

But we already know that Adam and Eve were created as image bearers in the likeness of God. They're not missing anything. What the serpent is tempting Eve to do is to decide for herself what was good and right in her eyes regarding this tree that was forbidden.

[21:17] We see what's going on. We see where this is going. And I don't know about you, but I start thinking, man, only if there was a preacher right there.

Someone to say, Eve, he's misleading you. Don't do it. Someone who is guarding the garden at this point. Only if someone was there.

Verse 6, the woman decides to take and eat of the forbidden fruit, explicitly forbidden by God, and she also then gives to her husband who was with her.

Someone was there tasked with guarding the garden. And he failed. He takes the fruit, no questions, no challenge, and there is the crime that changed the course of human history.

Eve sinned, deciding for herself what was good and right in her own eyes. Adam sinned, doing nothing, abdicating his role as the keeper of the garden and the protector of his wife.

[22:33] Verse 7, both of their eyes were open, but their eyes were not open to the wisdom of God. Their eyes were open to their own nakedness. shame.

It's a way of describing shame. We all know shame. Ed Welch, in his book *Shame Interrupted*, defines it this way, shame is the deep sense that you are unacceptable because of something you did, something done to you, or something associated with you, you feel exposed and humiliated, end quote.

Everyone in this room knows shame firsthand. Varying degrees, but we all know it. We know exactly what Adam and Eve were experiencing at this moment.

Their sense of nakedness was their sense of shame of having disobeyed God's command. They knew it, and they knew that there was consequences to come.

And so at this point, in the garden, shame enters the human experience. You could trace your shame all the way back to the garden.

[23:53] And look what they do. They make loincloths for themselves out of fig trees, fig leaves. They are self-atoning.

They are covering their own shame with their own efforts. Many people today try to cover their shame against God, with God, by trying to impress people with their accomplishments.

It's a way of trying to cover your shame. Just one of many ways. And ever since, men and women, boys and girls, have been trying to self-atone for their shame.

Let's turn this to the workplace. Have you ever thought about your workplace as a gathering point of image bearers who are ashamed and trying to self-atone?

You yourself know shame. You yourself know what it means to try to cover your shame. This is the crime that changed everything for us.

[25:18] God comes to the garden and it's a trial. God comes into the garden and he knows full well what has already happened and he's coming to give Adam and Eve an opportunity to humble themselves and repent.

What you just need to notice in verse 8 is God, knowing everything that happens, moves towards Adam and Eve in their disobedience. He moves towards them.

And what do Adam and Eve do? They move away from God and they hide in their shame behind the trees in the garden.

The very trees that God had planted to provide for Adam and Eve, they are now trying to find cover from God's eyes. But God sees them anyway.

Shame for our disobedience against God leads us to attempt to hide from God in His creation.

[26:28] And do you know where today's people go and hide? We're more sophisticated than Adam and Eve. We're not trying to hide behind trees. Where we try to hide from God's sight is in the very vocations He has called us to bless others.

We hide in our work. We hide in our busyness hoping that God will not see us trying to push down the shame and keep God's eyes, holy eyes, off us.

People covering themselves with their own accomplishments, trying to hide in their various fair arms of work. You know why we're all stressed out?

Because we're hiding from God. This trial consists of four gracious questions. Each one is aimed at Adam.

There's three to Adam and one at Eve and they're all designed to elicit a humble repentant response. God is trying to help Adam and Eve here.

[27:46] Question one, verse nine, where are you? Where are you, Adam? God knows where he is.

God knows exactly where Adam is. So think about this question, where are you? As a, come to me, Adam. I'm here, Adam.

Come to me. Come out of hiding, Adam. Come and talk to me. What a gracious, wonderful God this is.

Inviting this sinner to come to him, to be honest with him, to come out of hiding. And if you're in the room and you have realized I am hiding from the living God, you also need to understand that today he calls you to come to him.

Where are you? Come to me. Let's talk. Verse 10, Adam admits that he was hiding, hiding from God, aware of his nakedness, afraid.

[29:04] It's the first time in all of creation that an image bearer is afraid of the living God. Fearful of God's condemnation for his disobedience.

And here is God saying, come to me, Adam. Let's talk. Questions 2 and 3 are more questions put to Adam.

The third question is, hey, have you eaten from the tree that I have forbidden you to eat from? And in verse 12, it is such a sad thing to see, but we all know it so well.

In his shame, in his pride, Adam does not fully own his own disobedience, but tries to minimize his disobedience by casting blame on Eve.

The woman whom you gave to be with me, he's thrown God under the bus. She gave me fruit and I ate.

[30:12] She's responsible. He's diminishing his responsibility. He's trying to skate around what God and he know already to be true.

He's abdicating again. Verse 13, the Lord turns to the woman. Question 4, what is this that you have done?

And like her husband, she blame shifts. She points to the serpent who deceived her and she ate. She doesn't own that she has disregarded God's command and decided for herself what is good and right in her eyes of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

She skates around it by trying to point at the serpent and blames him. In this trial, we see God patiently, graciously drawing out Adam and Eve so that they would humbly confess their sin, but they choose in their pride to blame one another and to try to get out of full responsibility for their sin before God.

The blame game. Has anybody experienced at work, in your home, in church, or somewhere in our community, blame shifting?

[31:38] Oh yeah. We all know it. Blame shifting. It flows out of this corruption of heart that took place.

This shame and pride now tries to redirect, misdirect, so we don't have to bear the full responsibility of our actions. Eve's sin in the garden, millennia ago, Adam and Eve's sin reaches reaches into the 21st century in our shame, in our pride, in our blame shifting, in our work, in our homes, in our church, and around the community.

Verses 14 through 21, the sentencing. Trials over, questions made, Adam and Eve, having fully owned up. Verses 14 through 21, sentencing.

Curse. If blessing is the experience of God's full goodness and interrupted peace, peace with God, peace with creation in your vocation, peace with one another, peace with yourself, fullness of that every day, every minute, if that is blessing, curse is the withdrawal of God's blessing and the introduction of hardship and hostility.

Never meant to be. Not part of God's original design. And in this sentencing, we see God curse, withdraw his blessing, first on the serpent.

[33:35] He's to crawl on his belly. He is to be cursed above all the beasts of the field and of the livestock. Above all, he is cursed to be under them all in the dust.

And not only that, verse 15, God will put enmity, hostility between the serpent and the woman and their offspring and will culminate in one of the offspring of Eve crushing his head.

Here in the midst of the curse is a glorious promise. There's going to come one, an offspring of Eve, an offspring, one person who will crush the head of the serpent and he will reverse the effects of the curse.

God makes a huge gospel promise at this moment. He's going to withdraw what he withdrew so that there's fullness of blessing.

To the woman, verse 16, God doesn't use the word curse, but that's essentially what God does. He withdraws his blessing from a woman's unique calling and role in being fruitful and multiplying through childbearing.

[34:59] Instead of bearing image bearers with ease, now there's going to be multiplied pain. You see that in verse 16?

Pain. This is a unique calling women have and blessing is withdrawn.

God withdraws his blessing from a woman in another way and man. A woman was originally called as her husband's helpmate and instead of peace, God pronounces that his blessing would be withdrawn from her relationship with her husband and now there will be struggle from helpmate to stalemate.

there will be a battle of wills for control of the marriage relationship. Hostility now enters into the relationship between a husband and a wife and we've been experiencing it ever since.

It's a distortion of God's good design. the sentence on the woman is the withdrawing of God's blessing on child rearing in a marriage relationship and now we experience as normal what God has withdrawn as blessing.

[36:30] That's normal for us now. It's not normal. It's not what God intended. this is a consequence of Adam and Eve's sin and it's a consequence we live with.

Verses 17 through 19 God turns to the man and speaks curse to the man because he listened to Eve over listening to God what God commanded he curses the ground.

He withdraws blessing from the ground. Where God withdraws blessing from the production of Eve's fertility he withdraws blessing from Eve's production from the fertility of the ground.

And now there's pain toil hardship what is normal for us now was not normal in the garden before the fall.

Thorns and thistles now there's something resisting our work. Has anybody experienced this before?

[37:46] You're trying to get work done. Your computer does something weird and for an hour to two hours you're just trying to kind of pull the weeds of this computer so that you can get back to your work.

Modern day thorns and thistles the earth resists us now. Have you ever wondered why highly productive days are so rare?

It's because of this. The curse as a consequence for Adam and Eve's sin. 19 by the sweat of your brow instead of minimum effort for maximum results now it's maximum effort for limited results.

In this sentencing God withdraws his blessing from Adam from the earth. Hardship pain hostility struggle are what follows.

In verses 20 to 21 we see hope. Adam names his wife Eve the mother of all living. Even in the midst of all this cursing there's still this sense of life.

[39:15] There's still going to be multiplying. There's still going to be filling. There's still going to be subduing. There's still going to be having dominion but now all of it's challenged.

All of it is resisted. Sin has entered the world. Curse has come. Now things are hard. In verses 20 through 24 there's the judgment.

Genesis 3 closes with Adam and Eve wearing the God made garments that he has put on them of animal skins. Another mercy of God. They are expelled from the garden.

They're driven away from the tree of life. No eating of that. They will die. And instead of Adam guarding the garden God has replaced him with an angel preventing his return.

So here we have image bearers who have been cast out of God's presence experiencing shame seeking to hide in their pride blaming one another. Pain hardship sweat toil difficulty resistance does that sound familiar?

[40:32] that's the world we live in. CSI Eden crime trial sentence judgment it all points to that sin has corrupted all of our humanity including the goodness of work.

You know what I love about my Bible? It's realistic. I'm a biblical realist. this describes what all of us experience day in and day out.

Yes God has withdrawn his blessing from our vocations. Yes now there is hardship and hostility but the real problem is a God problem.

When we cut God out of all of our lives including our vocations because of our sin something else takes his place. And often times it's our very work that he's called us to do to bless others as his representative.

I'm wrapping up. Bear with me. In her very helpful article called Human Flourishing Danielle Saladay points to three mistakes that we experience because God is removed from our work.

[42:02] We are left with a self centered view of work. We think that work is for me. Work is about me. When God said no, work is about you representing me, God, and doing good to others.

So let me just share with you in closing what these three mistakes are, and I'm going to point you to the one who will redeem us from these things.

That's what we're going to focus on next week. Mistake number one, because we remove God from our work, we wrongly value certain types of work over others.

we play favorites with our work. We think some work is better than other work. If you're over at the hospital, you could make the mistake that doctors are more important than the housekeeping staff. Like they're more valuable. They're more worth full. That's a result of sin.

[43:16] Jesus the offspring of Eve who came crushed the head of the serpent is seeking to reverse the curse. And so instead of valuing certain types of work over others, we value all work in the image bearers that do them.

Second mistake. This is one that many of us will be able to relate with. we place our identity in our work.

You cut God out of work and what you're going to try to do is find your identity in it. You're going to try to hide in your work. You're going to cover yourself with your work. And not only we place our identity in our work, we seek justification through our work.

Why I exist being acceptable. people and Jesus the descendant the offspring of ease came and crushed the head of the serpent to reverse this.

So instead of placing identity in our work we place our identity in what has come from his finished work on the cross. And our very justification comes through his cross work.

[44:35] You need to be rescued from finding your identity in what you do. You need Jesus for that. The last mistake is that we work as independent operators solely responsible for our daily provision forgetting that God is our ultimate provider.

It's what Paul Tripp calls God amnesia. We forget God. We are never meant to be this way. Not in our work not in anything.

And so Jesus has come crushed the head of the serpent reversing the curse to make independent operators into dependent creatures seeking to bless others through our work.

All these mistakes point to one thing. We have a tendency to worship our work to make an idol of what we do.

And that's why we are in such desperate need of the promised offspring of Eve who would come crush the head of the serpent and reverse the curse bringing blessing to all people.

[45:53] Jesus alone is able to reintegrate God back into all of our lives including our work blessing us and making us a blessing to all that we work with.

So students Jesus intends to redeem your school work for God's glory and the good of others.

Salesmen Jesus intends to redeem your work as a salesperson to glorify God and to bless others.

Managers Jesus intends to redeem your managing to glorify God and to bless others.

And so next week this week we've looked at work corrupted next week work redeemed. Jesus at work in our work how his cross work changes our day to day work and if you want to put it in the words of Psalm 46 1 he is our ever present help in our callings.

to redeem it for God's glory and the good of all. What sin has corrupted Jesus alone is able to sanctify.

[47:19] All glory and praise and honor and power and majesty be to the name of Jesus.

Amen. God help us in the name of Jesus. Amen.