

Expressing fullness in the Workplace

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[0 : 00] Let's read together, starting chapter 3, verse 1. Therefore, what is earthly in you, sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

On account of these, the wrath of God is coming. In these, you too once walked when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away, anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth.

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.

Here there is no Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free, but Christ is all and in all. Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another, and if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other.

As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these things, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you are called in one body.

[1 : 47] And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, submit to your husbands as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.

Bond servants, obey in everything those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service as people please, but with the sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord.

Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

[2 : 52] For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality. Masters, treat your bond servants justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a master in heaven.

Good morning, everyone. Will you pray with me as we come to God's word? Father, you have raised Christ to your right hand with heaven and earth under his feet, and so I pray that you would help us to see how all our work endeavours also should be under his feet.

So please speak to us today. Encourage and convict us. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, a passage about slavery.

We've kind of got to deal with that awkwardness, don't we? I'm thinking of Britain in the 1700s, 1800s.

They actually had a slave trade. Their economy built to a large extent on slavery. So this Christian country using slavery.

[4 : 18] But the problem there wasn't the Christianity. The problem there was they needed to become more Christian. And I want to illustrate that with the amazing life of a politician, William Wilberforce.

If you've seen the movie *Amazing Grace* about his story, I would really recommend it. His life is an amazing one. So he was a British minister of parliament in 1780.

He got into parliament. For about 50 years he served. And he became a believer in Christ after he was in parliament. And he spent 40 hard years devoted to abolishing the slave trade.

And then he wanted to make slavery itself, not just the trade, illegal as well. So apparently in 1787, Wilberforce wrote a letter.

He estimated that the annual export of slaves from the western coast of Africa for all nations at that time, not just Britain, was 100,000 people per year.

[5 : 24] And not all of those would survive the boat trip. He was disgusted by it. And this disgust came out of his Christian faith.

He spent 20 years fighting it. And we've got to appreciate that he got severe opposition. People feared that it would destroy the economy. England didn't want France and Portugal to become stronger if they just stopped doing it.

He got severe opposition to this. And he suffered medically. He had many young children at home. He had six children. And he had the troubles at home. He had an embattled life.

But he was known for his joy. Just a little anecdote. He was known for playing with his children when he got home. Embattled but full of joy, this guy. Victory came in 1807.

So one biographer described it this way. The House of Representatives rose almost to a man and turned towards Wilberforce in a burst of parliamentary cheers.

[6 : 30] Suddenly above the roar of hear, hear and quite out of order, three hurrahs echoed and echoed. While he sat, head bowed, tears streaming down his face.

So that was when the trade was finally abolished. 1807. And then he spent the rest of his life trying to make slavery itself illegal in Britain.

And he heard news that it finally happened three days before he died. So he got that wonderful privilege of hearing that it had been undone.

Quite a fun fact. He also started the RSPCA. I thought that was interesting. So I'll share that. The seeds or the roots that undermined slavery was what is in the Gospel.

That's what initially inflamed this cause in Wilberforce. And it's what strengthened him throughout much opposition. It's what he called the peculiar doctrines of Christianity.

[7 : 36] Not saying they're weird, but saying that they're distinct. They're distinct from any other worldview. What he meant by that was there's a direct link between how you see the world, the truth, and therefore how we should live.

And slavery just doesn't fit with those truths. So things like people being made in the image of God. Your worth isn't based on your utility or anything else.

But each person bears the image of God. Human depravity. He wasn't afraid of calling out his nation about how depraved the practice was.

He believed in divine judgment. The substitutionary work of Christ on the cross. Justification by faith alone. And we could go on. But these are the seeds that broke and undermined slavery then.

And they're the seeds that should be undermining forms of slavery that still exist today. And they are planted.

[8 : 44] These seeds, these deep roots, they're planted right here in this book of Colossians that talks about slavery. So at this point, we need to distinguish a little bit between that slavery that Wilberforce fought to undo and ancient slavery back in the time of Rome.

Again, the Bible isn't endorsing slavery. The seeds are right here to undo it. But back then, slavery, it was more like a long-term employment.

It wasn't as barbaric, although it could be severe punishments. I don't want to paint too rosy a picture here. But a slave in the house of a governor, for instance, could have way more security and way more honour in society than a free, ordinary person.

So we've got to just make that nuance when we think of slavery here. The other reason I raise Wilberforce as the introduction to this sermon on the workplace, so I'm just going to make a leap here in terms of master slaves and to kind of those in authority and those who are employees.

But Wilberforce is interesting because when he became a Christian, he was not sure whether he should stay in politics. Could he be a Christian and stay in politics?

[10 : 18] He was really troubled by that and he was wondering, should he be devoted to something else, maybe going to church ministry? And he went to John Newton, the guy who wrote Amazing Grace, for advice.

Now, that advice could have changed the direction of his life and praise God that Newton said, no, stay in politics. You can serve the Lord Christ in politics.

So he's an interesting case in that he saw himself as a servant of Christ where he was planted in his position in politics.

So how about you? Can you see yourself as a servant of Christ in the work you have to do? How does knowing Christ transform your work?

When I talk about work today, I am going to be speaking in terms of employment. But the principles, I think, can apply to unpaid volunteering and any social justice causes you're involved in.

[11:24] I think in parenting, I think in caring for elderly parents and other care roles. So the principles will apply, but as I talk today, I'll be mainly talking about employment.

So how can you be a Christian in your work? I think we can come up with a few answers. Taking evangelism opportunities with colleagues and clients.

Providing money for the family, because we're called to care for our families. To earn money to give to the church and ministry here and abroad. To earn money to give to those in need.

Balancing work commitments to free you up so that you can serve in church activities. Now, I think these are the common answers I hear and I think of straight away.

And they're good and they're proper. I don't want to dismiss those answers. But I think there's a huge hole missing if that's all we say about how to be a Christian in work.

[12:29] But as you write and send an email, as you write up that report, as you meet with that client, as you change the bedpan for that patient, how does knowing Christ affect those day in, day out tasks?

Or do you leave Christ in the car as you walk into the office? Or walk into the room at the end of the house, everyone working from home now.

But do we know how Christ fits in that? Considering how much of our time and energies we spend in work, I think that's a big hole if we can't see how Christ is Lord there as well.

We might think, just don't do anything unethical. But surely it's more than that. And it is more than that. And this passage tells us. Being full in Christ has a lot more to say than just don't do anything unethical.

Tim Keller in his really good book. Today I can't cover the topic of work from a biblical point of view. Tim Keller's book, *Every Good Endeavour*, I would really recommend it.

[13:47] But he asked an interesting question in it. He asked this question. At the end of your life, will you wish that you had plunged more of your time, passion and skills into work environments and work products that helped people to give and receive more love?

It's an interesting question. Will you wish I gave more to work because you're a Christian? It's an interesting question to consider. I think if we don't see how fullness in Christ should overflow into our work, then we're going to be in danger of trying to fill our souls with work.

Trying to use work to do something it just can't do. Keller has the term, the work behind the work. So work is hard.

The tasks are hard. Living in this broken world is hard. But the work behind the work is trying to fill up your sense of value as a person, your sense of security, your sense of meaning.

If you're trying to use work to do that, that makes work really, really unbearably hard. A Chinese-American comedian, Jimmy O. Yang, told his dad his desire to become an actor.

[15:16] And his dad's response, he says, was this. If you follow your dreams, you become homeless. Everyone does what he hates to get money to then do what he loves.

He said it a lot funnier than I can say it. But don't follow your dreams. You become homeless. No one does that.

Just use work, get money, and then fill up yourself with what you love. Without Christ, we can undervalue work, seeing no meaning in it apart from that paycheck to then fill our lives with family and security and leisure and whatnot.

And haven't we seen it lately? COVID has exposed that, where we were pouring so much into work, and now people are like, I want more work-life balance, actually. It's swung.

People want to work from home and all those things. The great resignation. So many people resigned because they want more fulfilment. They're just using work to fill up on things that they actually love.

[16:27] Or more recently, there's the trend of quiet quitting. People don't care about their work. They want the paycheck, so they won't quit, but they just give a half...

I can't say that word. They give a half effort. Sorry. They give... They don't give... Their heart isn't in it. They quietly quit.

We still are full of rich... Getting quick... Rich... I can't even get my words right today. The schemes are out there. The lottery is still alive and well.

So we can undervalue work, but we can also overvalue work. Pinning much of our identity on it. That this is who I am. This will fill my sense of worth as a person.

You can do it in ministry. My value as a person is because I'm a pastor. That is wrong. That is wrong. And you need to remind me of that.

[17:30] My value of a person is in Christ. We can use work as if it gives us our security in this broken world. Get enough money and you'll be safe.

No. Get enough position in society and you'll be safe. Or we can use it to fill our lives with meaning. So we can undervalue work. We can overvalue work. And I think when we try to overvalue work, trying to fill our buckets with work, I think that makes success absolutely necessary.

Failure is devastating. Weakness is shameful. Because we have to have success to feel like a full person. And if we think like that, that can make immorality seem reasonable.

Maybe even the only option. Like taking credit for other people's work. Fudging the numbers just a little bit. Exaggerating time frames so that you win the bid.

[18:42] Being harsh on workers when things don't go to plan. It can also lead to an imbalance of priorities, of work and rest and family and church.

Perhaps we feel like we're struggling at home. And so we overinvest in work because we can control that. We can feel more fulfilled there when we should be pushing into the struggle at home. And I think it can also lead to a distorted way of decision making. Even in our work, we can evaluate the importance of tasks not based off the needs of people.

Because we're limited creatures. We can't give all our energies to every single task. Do we base the things we prioritise on the needs of people or what will fulfil me? Don't we gravitate towards the tasks that just fulfil us when we overvalue work?

So we can't undervalue work. We can't overvalue work. And what we need is, therefore, to know the fullness of Christ. And so how can we not become full but express fullness while working?

[19:54] By setting our minds on things above, verses 1 and 4. Similar to like we saw in the family structures last week. Work is redeemed and restored to God's original design as his image bearers.

You can express fullness in Christ in whatever situation you're in right now. Whether you're under authority or in authority or a mixture, this is Christ's sovereignly chosen context for you to know fullness in him and express it.

This is where the rubber hits the road. Whether we realise how full we are in Christ. So in verses 1 to 4, we're commanded to set our minds on things above.

If success in work validates who I want to be, my sense of wellbeing will be a rollercoaster or we'll just see work as a means to another end. We'll be tempted to use people for our own sake.

But if I set my mind on things above, we remember that I am chosen by God. I am holy and loved. That never changes, no matter what's going on in work.

[21:10] My status is not greater because I have position and authority over others, nor is my status diminished because I am an employee or apprentice or a student. Because I have the highest status in the universe.

In the cosmos, I am in Christ, at God's right hand. You cannot get higher. I am a servant of the king of the universe. I am a child with the greatest inheritance.

And I am not alone in my struggle. His powerful grace is at work in me and through me. His grace covers my sin and shame. He helps me in my weakness and temptation.

So I have freedom not to be paralysed by weakness, but to engage in the struggle for his glory. My purpose in life is much bigger than my own story to create a successful, comfortable, self-affirming kingdom.

My purpose is to be part of Christ's cosmic story of reconciling all things to himself. I am called to represent his grace where I am, that the work I do redeems this little patch of his world.

[22:19] I'm engaged in his cosmic plan of redeeming everything to himself. My bucket is full to the point of overflowing, and therefore, as verse 17 says, whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

I am to be conscious of Christ's authority and his grace all the time. I am to be representing that wherever I am.

I like how, again, I'll quote Keller here. I'm leaning heavily on his book, but Keller puts it this way.

You are adopted into God's family, so you already have your affirmation.

You are justified in God's sight, so you have nothing to prove. You have been saved through a dying sacrifice, so you are free to be a living one.

You are loved ceaselessly, so you can work tirelessly in response to a quiet and inner fullness. It's out of fullness in Christ that work is redeemed.

[23 : 37] So let's get into God's word. How does this fullness in Christ overflow into the workplace? Let's consider those under authority, the employee. We're called to see past what you can see with your eyes and see who you're really working for.

As you fill in that time sheet, as you work from home, as you're coming to the end of the day and you just want to finish, so you want to just cover over your mistakes and just leave them as it is.

As you represent your company on a business trip, as you make a sales pitch, promising timeframes and things, whose eyes are you working for?

Whose opinion of you is most important? Are you conscious that you are doing all things for Christ, that you are representing Christ as his servant?

This mindset lifts all work to a heavenly calling. It doesn't diminish it. It lifts it into the heavens.

[24 : 45] Even the most unappreciated, difficult, dirty work, you can be consciously working for Christ. So what does this look like?

What motivates this kind of thinking? Well, first, what it looks like. It's done from the inside out. Since the Lord looks at the heart, it's wholeheartedness.

Because people only see what's on the outside. So verses 22 and 23. Bond servants, obey in everything, those who are your earthly masters, not by way of eye service, as people please, but with sincerity of heart or wholeness of heart, fearing the Lord.

Whatever you do, work heartily as for the Lord and not for men. Accountability is a big problem these days with people working from home.

I heard the other day that one US company, to try and fight this because they've got lots of employees, the employees sign up to accountability where their camera on their screen takes a photo of them every 10 minutes.

[26 : 04] And they can record whether your keyboard has been used or mouse has been used every 10 minutes. If they don't see you at your desk, you don't get paid for that 10 minutes. That's a very law way of going about things.

It's a big issue at the moment. But here's the real solution. The Lord is always present. Here's the real accountability. The Lord has told us to obey those he's placed over us.

I don't think this means we have to be firing on all cylinders, that Christ is there to go stop slacking off or whatever. I don't think we're meant to think that way.

This is more about whose eyes we're conscious of, Christ or people, because we are so inclined to fearing people. The Bible has lots to say on that.

If it's people, you're using work to fill your bucket, either doing the bare minimum to get the money or wanting to fill up your worth and security with the opinions of your parents or superiors or colleagues, comparing yourself to your colleagues.

[27 : 16] But if it's the Lord you're serving, it's going to be marked by integrity in every task, transparency, seeing your gifting as from God to serve him, to be partnering with God in redeeming all the world.

I think this mindset also applies to which tasks we give priority to, which we give our best efforts to. For example, we might labour over a presentation we've got to give to colleagues because we care about our reputation, so we spend so long on that task, but then someone at work who is struggling and needs some training, we're not generous.

In the behind the scenes, no one will notice if you help that person with that training them up in that task. Do you see how the fear of people can push us in the wrong direction?

In over-emphasising. Or we might rush and do a half-hearted effort for a small job because a bigger paying client is waiting for us?

When we think of the eyes of people, it will affect our decision-making. Now, outcomes and what people see are important.

[28 : 37] Like, I want my electrician to not leave an exposed wire that could cause a fire. Like, outcomes are important. It's not just the inside that matters, but outcomes alone aren't the only measure of faithfulness.

The Lord cares about the intentions and motives of the heart. I think we need to remember this because we can't always control the outcomes.

We can feel a sense of failure and shame that isn't ours to carry. We need to remember that we live in a broken world which will affect the outcomes.

Like a medical specialist just can't find or can't do anything about certain diseases. That's just the brokenness of this world.

Or it's also broken in that there is too much good to do. We can't do it all. And we can feel ashamed that we haven't done enough. We've only helped this one person when there's a hundred more who need help.

[29 : 42] But again, that's not ours to carry. Work is broken in the sense that even our good decisions can lead to unintended bad consequences down the track.

We live in a fallen world, so we can't just measure faithfulness on outcomes. We need it. God looks at the intentions, the wholeheartedness. We need to remember we're waiting for the city built by God where it seems in Scripture there will be work.

And work is just going to be full of joy. This attitude also frees us, I think, to receive work as a gift. Not something we need to succeed at to prove ourselves, but as a gift to enjoy, as Ecclesiastes talks about. Instead of working for the eyes of people, we are to fear the Lord.

To fear the Lord. That phrase, we always need to define that because it's not a cowering fear that Christ is looking for reasons to get us in trouble.

[30 : 57] That's not what it's saying. Fearing the Lord is a response to his greatness. It's a response to his grace to us. So, for instance, in Psalm 130, verse 4, But with you there is forgiveness that you may be feared.

It's the forgiveness that motivates the fear. Or this phrase in our passage, with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. That same phrase is used by the prophet Samuel just before he dies.

He urges Israel, It's grace that motivates consciousness of God, fearing him.

We don't want to displease the one who has lavished such goodness on us. We don't want to displease him. We're not afraid of him. We just don't want to displease him.

That's what fearing means. And this is super important because we will be controlled by the one we think has the ability to give us life. If that's people or whether that's the Lord.

[32 : 15] So the key here is the start of verse 24, knowing. This consciousness is knowing something that will help us fear the Lord and not people.

So if we consider what earthly masters can offer us, higher status in a promotion, financial bonus, owning shares in the company, security of employment, their approval, perhaps public approval, maybe more leisure, more holidays.

They can offer us that. Is that life? Slaves back then, the lodging, the food, the honour, the kind treatment. That's what a master here can give us.

Now compare that to what the Lord gives us. Verse 24, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

You will be part of the new heavens and earth. Promotion or belonging in God's forever kingdom? Who do you think will give you life?

[33 : 29] Because you'll serve the one you think can give you life. Now this inheritance, we've already heard it in chapter 1, verse 12, we give thanks to the Father who has qualified you.

So it's not our work that means we qualify for work for the new heavens and earth. It's that the Father has qualified us. It's knowing that he's the one who gives us life and so we fear him.

And notice the two, the word inheritance. So slaves had no right to the inheritance. But the Colossian slaves were to be motivated as sons and daughters of the king.

They have an inheritance. They need to remember who they are. The earthly incentive can hold no sway when you remember all that we have been given in Christ.

If you miss out now, you're still rich. How can you be incentivised to not live for Christ? And on the flip side, we fear the Lord and not people because he is the one who punishes wrongdoing.

[34 : 45] We shouldn't be threatened by people into disobeying Christ. Now, I'm not 100% sure what this means. It could be a few things and it could be all these things.

It could be remembering that in this life, it's Christ who will dish out the consequences if we do wrong. So it could be in this life he dishes out the consequences.

It could mean that we will feel shame on the final day when we give an account for our life. If we're just investing all this time in business in unethical ways and for our selfish gain, that's all going to be burned away.

We will be saved but that's going to be burned away. So maybe the punishment there is that. Maybe it's about the masters. Yes, you're being treated unjustly at times but remember who is the avenger of wrongdoing.

It's not you. It's the Lord's prerogative to avenge the wrongdoer. So you don't need to cower under your earthly master because you know they will face Christ one day.

[36 : 00] It could be all these things. I'm not quite sure. I think another implication of these verses is that if you're using work to fill up your sense of worth and security, you can never rest.

You can't rest because you'll lose yourself. Even when you're with your loved ones, your mind is on the job or you feel guilty for having that day off.

That's a sign that you are trying to fill your bucket with something other than Christ because Christ commands rest. He's a just and good master.

He commands rest for you and he commands rest for those under you. And it's a way of acknowledging that I'm a creature. I'm limited. I don't make the world go round.

Christ does. So fearing the Lord, not man, will produce two good fruits. On the one hand, it will give us courage, courage to live for Christ because he's the one who gives us the great reward.

[37 : 20] You will follow him even if it means injustice and pain because you know that he's the one who will hold those doing the injustice to account. So we can't be incentivized to not live for Christ.

We can't be threatened to not live for Christ if we're fearing the Lord, not worrying about the eyes of people. Okay, so let's transition then to those in authority.

What if you're in some level of authority at work? What does fullness look like? You are to treat those under you as your master treats you with justice, fairness, not favoritism.

This doesn't mean treating others as equals in authority. I think in Australia we try and flatten all authority. This isn't saying that.

But it's treating people with justice as image bearers, as valuable in the eyes of God. Be as Christ to those under your authority.

[38 : 30] So do you use your employees like machines, what you can wring out of them? Do you use them for their output?

Only caring what they can do for you. Because that kind of mindset will lead to harsh treatment, not paying wages on time, creating a culture where everyone feels ashamed to use their rightful benefits of days off and things like that.

Creating a culture of fear of failure. I remember one CEO saying in his business he would not punish people for failing. He would get people in trouble if they didn't ask for help when they knew they needed help.

One makes people cower if they get anything wrong. The other encourages people to ask for help and to serve one another. I think another way we can be harsh with those under authority is not caring about the whole person, the personal state of your workers, not empathising with them.

Their personal life could be really burdensome and if we just treat them according to the outcomes of their work, again, I don't think that's justice and fairness.

[39 : 59] We're to treat as Christ treats us. Or do your employees encounter something just out of this world, like Christ's character, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, seeking reconciliation?

That would stand out if you're in authority with that kind of character. So do you apply the same expectations and accountability to believing and unbelieving employees because Christ shows no partiality?

I think in Christian organisations we can unfairly expect over and above the agreed work simply because they're Christian.

Again, that's not justice and fairness. do you seek to take into account the whole story when a conflict emerges among employees or someone misses a deadline, makes an error?

Do we factor in the whole story? I think justice and fairness can mean sometimes those deadlines and things, they're arbitrary.

[41 : 15] They're not absolutely has to be done. It's that bosses have just set this date and your employees haven't met it. Do you factor in the whole story and recognise that?

Do you factor in that your employees can't undo the weeds in work, that work is broken, they can't control the outcomes any more than you can?

Do we factor that in? Or to put it positively, do your employees find a safe place to thrive under your authority?

They find the character of Christ a safe place to thrive, treated as a valued person, not just a cog in the machine. A Christian in authority will see their worship of Christ not only in the spiritual realm or spiritual activities, they'll see it in how they represent God's character to those under their authority in the workplace.

So Isaiah 58 says, is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen? To loose the chains of injustice, to untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

[42 : 37] Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter? When you see the naked, to clothe them and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood, God cares about how you treat people, not just the spiritual spheres of our life, or to put it differently, everything's a spiritual sphere.

We'll come to that later. So what will motivate this sort of thinking, that I'm representing my master in heaven, how he treats me, I want to treat those under me?

What motivates that? Again is knowing something, knowing that you also have a master in heaven. You need to think of yourself as sharing the same position as your employees, under the rule of Christ.

Whether or not they gladly acknowledge Christ's rule, all are under the rule of Christ. Your authority is derived from the one with all authority.

authority, so use it to represent him. This should produce humility, I think, as a co-slave of Christ.

[43 : 54] I think it also means you have the opportunity to show the mercy of Christ. I think I've told this story before, but this lady made a mistake in her workplace and it just cost the business a lot of money.

Her manager, her boss above her went to the superiors and he took the blame for it. I think you can do that in a way that isn't lying, that he made the mistake.

He could say, it was my call, I signed off on it, it's my responsibility. He took the blame. He copped the flack, not her. She probably would have been fired. She was just amazed by this.

Why did that boss do that? She went into his office and just pestered him, why did you do that?

Usually bosses take the credit for the good things. You just took the blame.

Why? Finally, he got to explain why, because I'm a Christian and Christ took the blame for me.

What a wonderful opportunity to display what your master in heaven is like.

[45 : 07] When things don't go well, that could be a great opportunity to show the character of your master. So whether we are under authority or in authority, we are to be thinking Christ, representing him, overflowing with him, not trying to use work to fill ourselves up.

So let me finish with our usual question. What's going to prevent us from expressing this fullness in Christ into the workplace? I just want to raise two things briefly.

What's perhaps surprising about the gospel is that Christ doesn't dismiss anything that isn't done in the church as somehow less spiritual. Everything you might see is earthly, like the plumber unblocking a drain, or the disability worker showering and clothing that person who has soiled themselves.

He lifts all that up into the heavens as if you were doing this in the heavenly temple for his sake. He lifts it all up. It's all an act of worship.

You are serving the Lord Christ. To only be conscious of serving Christ in the so-called sacred sphere of church activities is to misrepresent the gospel.

[46 : 36] Christ is Lord of the whole cosmos. Everywhere. All times. We need to think like that.

Not think of this divide between secular and sacred. So let's help each other. Not see work as some kind of self-salvation, but let's also urge and pray and counsel one another to be overflowing Christ where he has us.

He's given us work to do. He wants us to represent him. So let's not think sacred, secular, but all things are under Christ.

And the second thing that could keep us from overflowing in Christ in our work is being concerned with being unequal in earthly things. Either trying to make sure that everyone is equal in authority and wealth and so on, or trying to downplay these differences, or looking over our shoulder and comparing ourselves.

Where do I stand? Am I above that person or below? If we're overly concerned like that, that's just not gospel thinking.

[47 : 52] being concerned with wealth differences and education differences, authority differences, skills differences. So what extent are you rating your position and worth in this church community?

Comparing yourself to others. I think it helps to picture the Colossians as they gathered for worship. Some of them slaves in the household, some of them masters, and what do we see when they gather for worship?

They are shoulder to shoulder. They're not two classes of people, they are one. They are all singing, all worshipping together.

They are all submitting to the same Christ in his word. They're all members of God's household, not by birth or social position, not by achievement, or by belonging to God, by pure grace.

It's a beautiful picture. Unequal and yet they're not even thinking about unequal. They're one in Christ. Christ is all and in all.

[49 : 05] So is that how you see yourself in this church community? We need to be relating to each other in that kind of way because that kind of thinking will propel us into our working week because we'll know our fullness is in grace and not try and use work to build up achievements and so on.

So let me finish by saying, with our buckets full in Christ already, our status is as high as the heavens are above the earth. Our reward is richer than any earthly currency.

We only show our inner emptiness if we try and use achievements or money or position to fill our sense of worth and security and meaning.

That just shows that you think you're empty. But that's not the case. We are full in him. The highest position, the highest reward.

We can rest from the work behind the work of trying to fill our empty buckets. Because Christ has filled our sense of worth. And then that means the proper value of work is redeemed.

[50 : 21] Not undervaluing it, not overvaluing it, but the proper value is redeemed. As servants of the Lord, empowered by his spirits, we can bear his image in all we do.

Serving the Lord wholeheartedly, grateful for his inheritance by grace. Passing on the Lord's just and caring treatment of us to those under our care.

The fullness of Christ ought to spill over into our church life, into our families, and into our work. And there's a very good reason for that.

Because in chapter 1, when Christ says that he will reconcile all things to himself by making peace by the blood of the cross, he means all things, including our work.

We can be full and show the world a better way, a full way, if we are conscious, knowing that we're doing all things for Christ.

[51 : 28] Will you pray with me? Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Father, in a sense, what we've covered today really is still only getting to the theory and how we should think.

And so I pray that for each of us, in the work you've given us to do, whether paid or unpaid, that you would be counselling us in our own mind as we talk to one another in what it specifically will look like to be overflowing the character of Christ and the fullness we have in you into where you've placed us.

Help us to trust that you are sovereign in where you have us, that this is where you want us to know you better and to display your character where you have us.

So please help us think that way. To the glory of your name. Amen.