

The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work

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[0 : 00] So, again, very good to be with you. I think the title and the idea comes both from scripture and from culture, and from Christian culture. I grew up with the poem, Only One Life, It Will Soon Be Past, Only What's Done for Christ Will Last, which has driven a generation of people into stated Christian ministry, that is, into some form of pastoral work or missionary service.

I'm going to suggest to you that the poem is absolutely right, for different reasons. Only what's done for Christ will last. But the second basis of the talk is actually, as I'll try to expound scripture, and particularly 1 Corinthians 15, 58, which is a chapter on resurrection, the resurrection of the body, the person, in totality, and that transfiguration of the person. At the very end, Paul says, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. I think we could contextualize, say, sit firm right now. Let nothing move you. Always give yourself fully to the work of the Lord. The interesting thing, just to expound that, if you're Scottish, it's the work of the Lord. Because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

I think we basically asked two questions, and I hope to be able to answer in part, perhaps not fully, these two questions. The first is, will our work last? The work we do, whether it's remunerated or voluntary, whether it's making meals or making a deal, will it last?

And what work will last? That's, I think, my first question. That is, the heavenly good of earthly work, expressed in terms of the lastingness of work that we might do in this life. Does it go beyond the grave? Okay? That's the first question. And the second question is, will we work in heaven? That is, the new heaven and the new earth. And we keep dropping the new earth. There's a well-known pastor in the city whose book I've just finished, and he says he went into pastoral ministry, leading a high-paid and good job in technology, because he wanted to do something of eternal value. And that's a very deeply rooted, you might say, conviction in popular Christian culture. I think these questions come from the Greek view of the human person. That is, we have an evil body shell, which is a problem to us, but inside is a precious immortal soul that is going to last forever. So the Greek view was the immortality of the soul. That is not the Christian view of the future. The Christian view of the future is the resurrection of the body. 1 Corinthians 15 is all about that. So I want to explore that first question, which is, will our work last? What work will last? That some work in this life, done with faith, hope, and love, will last and contribute to the new heaven and new earth. I say some because I think scripture says some work isn't going to. But I think scripture says some work will. And work, your labor in the Lord is not in vain. Now, I doubt that you've probably ever seen this phrase before. It's a bit shocking. But I believe that in the scripture, we are called to invest in and enrich heaven. Most people just think about going to heaven, but not investing in heaven or enriching heaven in some way, according to you. Here's a cartoon. What if there's no afterlife? Suppose this is all we get. Calvin and Hobbes, still thinking about that. Oh, what the heck. I'll take it anyway. Yeah, but if I'm not going to be eternally rewarded for my behavior, I'd sure like to know it now. Now, you won't have to read the Bible anymore, because this one slide covers everything from Genesis to Revelation. So you don't need to go to church. You'll hear sermons. Learner's exchange becomes obsolete. So basically, when we open up the Bible, I know many people say the New Testament tells us about the Great Commission, and then we go into Genesis, and it started with the Cultural Commission. But I look into Genesis, and I don't see one thing that God has called us to, but three. First of all, he placed Adam and Eve in a sanctuary garden where there was continuous communion with God. Communion. Secondly, he made humankind male and female in his image and built us for community. Community building is a full-time job.

[5 : 25] I'm a full-time husband, a full-time father, a full-time grandfather. And thirdly, he called us to work the earth and take care of it and to have dominion over the fish, the sea, birds, and the air

fill the earth.

And that means we are joining with God in creativity and work. The fall is Genesis 3, which disturbed everything. Our communion with God was broken. There's alienation, separation. Adam and Eve are hiding in the trees of the garden. There's brokenness in human relationships. Instead of a side-by-side between the man and the woman, there's now over-under. It's politicized. And instead of caring for creation, we destroyed. But under the new covenant, we have access to God through Jesus Christ. And we can call God Abba, Father, a term of intimate respect. And we have acceptance. We're adopted into the family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And we have fellowship, community together, the body of Christ, the brothers and sisters. And we can build neighbor relationships. We can love our neighbors, ourselves. And we have relatively meaningful work. The end hasn't come. It's not perfect. But relatively meaningful work and earth-keeping. But at the very end, the consummation of the whole story, there is, in the new heaven and new earth, continuous communion with God.

There is a wonderful community experience. The city of God, composed of mostly Mandarin-speaking people. But nevertheless, all languages, races, and kinds of people and ages. And then there is, I'm going to argue today, fulfilled creativity. It's possible to think of it this way, that God had in mind, before he made the world, an amazing rendezvous, the wedding supper of the land.

And when we have, we have large family birthdays, because we have, we used to have 18, but mom and dad passed. So we're now down to 16 people for our birthday parties. And Gail will think, well, we're going to have a party. So the next thing you think about is getting a cake. And you get the cake mix. And the next thing after that is you mix the blessed thing up. And this is where I don't know what happens next, but certain explosions take place, and the dough and other kinds of things happen. And then you turn on the oven, you put it in the oven, you pull it out, you add the icing and put candles on, and then you have the party. But the first thing you thought about was the party. It seems like God had in mind a grand rendezvous of humankind and himself. And so he made a world. And then when things go, went badly, he sent his own son. And then finally, it's going to bring that to an amazing sense of communion communion and consummation, which will be the glorification of everything. Communion, I think, means that work and worship will be one. They can be partially one now. That is, I think we can worship God through our work. But it will be one. And we will do everything for the glory of God and the love of God in the new heaven and new earth. I like to put it this way. Work and play will be one again as it was in childhood. Now, who do you think this is? It's me. As about a two and a half year old young gaffer in our backyard in Montreal. And interestingly, the hammer's in the left hand, and I'm actually right-handed. I'm pretty amphidextrous. So I think the school system pushed me to be right. And I should have gone with my left. I do certain things with my left hand. But basically, what am I doing here?

[9 : 27] Am I working or am I playing? I'm building a wooden house. I was destined to be a carpenter. So what am I doing? Am I working or am I playing? Well, you know, for a child, work and play is one.

And I think in the new heaven and new earth, you know, once again, through the dreadful process of growing up, we separate work and play. But it will be one again. And then in terms of community, the city of God will be a perfect community of interdependence. It will be the ultimate globalization. It'll be an amazing experience. I've sometimes said to groups I've had the privilege of visiting with, we'll have a grand reunion for our time together. And just think of that, that, you know, there'll be a learner's exchange. It won't be quite at 10 o'clock because we'll be rather timeless. But at least I think we will. I'm not sure. And then co-creativity, the third full-time job. Will work done in this life last into the next life is my question.

Does only gospel work have eternal significance? There's a great book written with the title, Earth Crammed with Heaven. And I think it's just, book titles aren't, except for very, very established authors who are able to insist that the title they've chosen be the title. But most authors, the title has to be chosen by the publisher because their marketing department wants to make sure the book is sold. And so this book is titled Earth Crammed with Heaven.

It's a wonderful title. But I want to turn it around and suggest that heaven might be crammed with earth. That is, that we might be making a contribution to the new heaven and new earth.

Because there is some continuity between this life and the next. There is discontinuity. But there's also continuity. And that's expressed in a number of ways. The New Jerusalem is related to this

world. It's a city and a land in Revelation 21-22. The resurrected body of Jesus. I think this is extraordinary when you think about it. I would have thought that the perfect resurrected body of Jesus, when he presented himself to the disciples, would have no scars. And yet there was continuity between his pre-crucifixion body and his crucifixion body and his resurrection body. There was some discontinuity because he was able to walk into a room with closed doors without going through the door. So that was kind of a neat thing. Don't you think, you know, when you're sort of visiting other people's mansions in the new heaven and new earth, you don't have to ring the doorbell or knock at the door. You just kind of slip through. I don't know. That's maybe beyond. And then Paul says, our labor in the Lord is not in vain. And in the final judgment, Jesus personally receives our service in this life. In Matthew chapter 25, you know, I was hungry and you fed me. You changed my diapers. You made that invoice for me. Oh, and of course surprise is the key to that whole parable because the righteous and the unrighteous both say, when did we see you in these situations?

[13:01] And then this wonderful passage in 1 Corinthians 15, which is a passage about the resurrection of the body. And here I'm quoting N.T. Wright. In the Lord, your labor is not in vain. You are following Jesus and shaping our world in the power of the Spirit. And when the final consummation comes, the work that you've done, whether in Bible study or biochemistry, whether in preaching or in pure mathematics, whether in digging ditches or in composing symphonies, will stand, will last.

Not everyone would agree with that. I do, but not everyone. There's this extraordinary passage in 1 Corinthians 3 where Paul says, if anyone builds on this foundation, which is Christ, their work will be shown for what it is. Because the day, capital D, will bring it to light. That's the day of final judgment and consummation. It will be revealed with fire. And the fire will test the quality of each person's work.

If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. That's the reward. Your work survives. If it is burned up. If it is burned up. The builder will suffer loss. But yet will be saved. Even though only as one escaping through flames.

So he posits the possibility that our work may or may not actually survive the fire test. Though we might be able to go through the fire at the end and be part of the new heaven as persons. New heaven and new earth. So I think the passage in 2 Peter 3, which many people have quoted as, this is proof positive, everything being reduced to the elements of the fire.

[15:08] That this proof positive that everything in this life will be annihilated. And then God will create out of nothing, once again, a new heaven and new earth. A brand new, if we wanted to make the point. A brand new heaven and earth.

And I don't think that's what Peter is saying at all. Because his next sentence is, will we wait for a new heaven and new earth? I think it's an image from the smelting industry, which certainly existed in the ancient world.

I've been to smelters in ancient Israel, where, I mean, very simple smelters. But basically, you used to put, and today you do put, ore into a hot cauldron, and turn up the heat, and it burns out the dross, and leaves the pure metal.

And I think that's the image of purification that we have in 2 Peter, which is our work, will be purified. It's going to go through the fire and will be purified.

And some of it may last. I don't think it means annihilation, but transformation. And then Romans 8 tells us that the earth groans and waits for liberation and for the revealing of the sons and daughters of God.

[16:22] And Revelation 14 tells us that the deeds of Christians follow them. Now, we could say, well, maybe there's a record. Well, maybe the deeds actually follow the things we do and have done will follow us, whether it's a piece of art, or whether it's a piece of voluntary work, or whether it's something we've invented, or it's something we maintain.

So the question of continuity of creation is actually very important, because if at the second coming of Christ everything is annihilated, and then he makes out of nothing a new heaven and new earth, then it doesn't matter what we do with this creation.

And believe me, in North America there are, I would have to say, millions of evangelicals who don't care a whit about what happens to the planet, because it's all going up in smoke anyway.

I'm serious about that. It doesn't matter what you do with the planet or in this life, because it's all going up in smoke, and then God will create a new heaven and new earth.

That, I do not think, is what the Bible teaches. I think the Bible teaches this, that at the second coming of Christ there will be a transfiguration of creation.

[17 : 43] The image could also be resurrection, but transfiguration is probably closer to the idea of transformation. It's what happened to Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, when this whole person goed, where it was beautiful, in a way even beyond what his beauty had been before.

And I think that's what the Bible points to, the final end of it all, in this life, is a transfiguration of creation and of ourselves.

So C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, it's extraordinary that book still has such a ring of truth and such a longevity. But he says, if I find in myself a desire which no experience in the world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.

And then Yves Conger was the French theologian who I think did the important theological spade work in advance of the Vatican II conference.

Out of it, a Protestant book came by Heinrich Kramer called *A Theology of the Laity*. It was sort of a Protestant response to it.

[19 : 00] But this was the Roman Catholic response. And I've read the book. I'm sorry that I couldn't read it in French, though I have some French. It's translated well into English. But he says, ontologically, that means in its very existence, this is the world that transformed and renewed will pass into the kingdom.

So, the dualist position, that's that some things are sacred or less, other things are secular or not. The dualist position is wrong. Final salvation will be achieved, to use as a metaphor, by a wonderful refloating of our earthly vessel, rather than the transfer of the survivors to another ship wholly built by God.

And there's a very famous evangelist who said, he had a vision from God, he said, that this world was a doomed ship, and that we need to get as many people off of it as we can into the lifeboat of salvation.

There's some truth in that, of course. But the idea is that this world is a doomed ship, and there will be a lifeboat that can save us. This is a pretty wonderful section of a very, very wonderful book called *Gilead*, which I think won the Booker Prize.

It's a pastor father writing and speaking to his little child that's so young, he can't really, he's died. But, not the child, but the father.

[20 : 31] Too young to actually understand it, but when he finally reads it. He said, I feel sometimes as if I were a child who opens its eyes on the world once and sees everything amazing, that it will never know any names for, and then has to close his eyes again.

I know this is all a mere apparition compared to what awaits us, but it is only lovelier for that. There is a human beauty in it. I can't believe that when we have all been changed and put on incorruptibility, we will forget our fantastic condition of mortality and impermanence.

That great, bright dream of procreating and perishing that meant the whole world to us. In eternity, this world will be Troy, I believe, and all that has passed here will be the epic of the universe, the ballad they sing in the streets, because I don't imagine any reality putting this one in the shade entirely.

And I think piety forbids me to try. Now, Martin Luther, I'm more of a Lutheran addict than a Calvin addict, okay?

But, both are good. They're fine. They're Christians. But, Luther preached a wonderful sermon on the resurrection on Easter Sunday, 1544.

[21 : 56] It's a lovely sermon. God will create a new heaven and new earth. I'm sure this is a condensation. He didn't preach for five minutes. He preached for not longer. Wherein righteousness shall dwell, it will be no arid waste, but a beautiful new earth where all the just will dwell together.

There will be no carnivorous beasts or venomous creatures for all such like ourselves, will be relieved from the curse of sin, and will be to us as friendly as they were to Adam in paradise.

Now, I don't know how many of you are dog lovers. We don't have a dog, and I had a bad childhood experience with a dog, okay? But every child whose dog dies asks his mother or his father, will my little dog be in heaven.

Luther has an answer. There will be little dogs with golden hair shining like precious stones. Now, the Roman Catholic Church, Our Lady of Barters, said, all dogs go to heaven.

But across the road was a Presbyterian church, Beulah. Only humans go to heaven, read the Bible. But you know, Catholics are not to be outdone.

[23 : 18] God loves all his creations, dogs included. But the Presbyterian church, dogs don't have souls. This is not open for debate.

It continues. Catholic dogs, Presbyterian dogs, can talk to their pastors.

Converting to Catholicism does not magically grant your dog a soul. Free dog souls with conversion.

Dogs are animals. There aren't any rocks in heaven either. All rocks.

Well, Luther didn't have the advantage of PowerPoint, so I'll finish the sermon, which is, the foliage of the trees and the verdure of the ash will have the brilliancy of emeralds, and we ourselves, delivered from our mundane, subjection to gross appetites and necessities, shall have the same form as here, but infinitely more perfect.

[24 : 35] Our eyes shall be radiant as the purest silver, and we shall be exempt from all sickness and tribulation, and we shall behold the glorious Creator face to face, and then, what inevitable satisfaction will it be to find our relations and friends among the just.

Beautiful sermon. Well, that's my first question, which is, will our work last? I don't know what of my work will last. I have a feeling I've written too many books, and perhaps most of them will go up in smoke at the end.

I think work matters will last, okay? That's my book on work. But, I don't know. I do know that there's going to be some things that I've made with my hands, and then we have them in the work.

I think a cedar deck I made. I was made with love and faith and hope, and I think it's going to be there. So, I'm going to invite you to a reunion of Learner's Exchange 2013.

On my deck, we're going to have bubble tea and Starbucks coffee. Choice. More choice in heaven. And, we'll reminisce about the good times we've had together in the Learner's Exchange.

[25 : 50] But, the second question, I'll be more brief with this, is, will we work in the new heaven and new earth? Will we actually be working? Not just whether, whether our work in this life can somehow last and be transfigured and find its place in the new heaven and new earth.

I think there are two reasons for my answering this yes. And, one is theological and the other is textual. Theological means based on the great themes of scripture rather than a specific text. It's what William Perkins called theology, the science of living blessedly forever. It's beautiful, actually. I mean, who wouldn't want to be a theologian if it's the study of how to live blessedly in the light of God and God's purposes and that's not just for this life but forever.

So, my two reasons are, first of all, theologically, is that we are not going to be disembodied souls in heaven. We're not going to be angels. We are going to be fully human beings.

and part of our dignity as fully human beings as we learn from Genesis is that we work. We're like God in two ways, at least.

[27 : 09] First of all, we're relational beings. He made us in His image, male and female. And secondly, we are people who are regents of our God and game.

That is, we work. And we develop the potential of creation because God Himself is a worker and as Jesus said, my Father is still working.

He's still working. So, I think there are strong theological reasons for us to say that to be fully human and even more human than we are now, we're not going to be angels and we're not going to be disembodied souls, but we're going to be wonderfully and fully human persons.

What Paul calls having spiritual souls. It's kind of difficult to even grasp what that means, but I think it means that perhaps our entire bodily life will be completely expressed through and responsive to spirit.

But bodily life. Okay? And then I have a second reason which I think is textually. That is from the last book of the Bible. I became a Christian at 18 years of age.

[28 : 25] I think I told you a bit of my story. What I didn't tell you, I think, is the first thing was an instinct. It was midnight when I became a Christian. My first instinct was to open the Bible and to read.

But do you know where I started? Revelation. I mean, it sounds crazy, but you know, they say a new little animal is just born. Whatever it first sees becomes its mother.

And so there's a kind of bonding that happens in that very, very beginning for people that have had a radical conversion, which I had. My wife, this kind of person grew up never knowing that she didn't

belong to God and loved Jesus.

It's just, you know, there's different ways for different people. But for me, that sort of radical first experience was to open the last book of the Bible and start reading and I stopped at the sixth seal. But Revelation is not a difficult book to understand. If you just follow my little chart, it's taken me a long time to build this up, but you know, it's actually, actually, Revelation is not a difficult book to understand.

[29 : 37] We find it difficult because we're biblically illiterate. Out of 404 verses, 397 have allusions to Scripture in the Old and New Testaments.

It's as though in the inspiration spirit, John, Pat Moss, threw the whole Bible up in the air and then it imploded in his brain to say that Jesus was Lord of Lords and King of Kings.

And he did that so marvelously throughout the whole book. So I think in that last book of the Bible, we see, how can I say it as honestly as I can because it's not so detailed as perhaps we might like. But I think there are more than just hints, there are more than just hints that we will work in the new heaven and new earth. For instance, in Revelation 21, 24, it says, the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.

Human creativity expressed fully and beautifully. Now, I've been to the National Museum in Taipei, Taiwan, and you probably know all the treasures of mainland China were brought by Shengkai-shek to Taiwan.

[30 : 56] So, when I was there, you just see crowds of mainland Chinese who've come to Taiwan to see their treasures, their cultural treasures, and absolutely beautiful.

I mean, exquisite. So, you wonder, and of course, I just think some of that's going to be in the new heaven and new earth, okay? Kings of the earth bring their glories into the holy city.

Then, from North America, they're leaving Donald Hamburgers in the new heaven and new earth. I'm teasing, of course, when I say that because there's been a lot of wonderful glories in every culture of the world.

Even what we sometimes call primitive cultures. So, there's a hint there. A little more than a hint, okay? And then, Revelation 21, 26, the glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it.

Again, it's just the next verse, but it's right there. And, suggesting again that some of the things that we have done in this world will be continued.

[32 : 05] and I like to think that there will be a kind of fulfillment of talents and gifts that we have which in this life we've never really fully expressed.

I'm a frustrated artist. and in this life I, you know, Gail and I spend most of our evenings watching BBC DVDs.

She's, as you well know, perhaps partially handicapped. So, she spends a lot of the day reading and then can't read in the evening too. So, we watch a lot of BBC videos.

And last night we were watching Dorothy Sayers Mysteries which are phenomenal. But, the one we watched was all about artists. I'm looking at this thing, you know, I just love to do that, you know.

And yet, I don't know, maybe I should just stop teaching and take a part. But I think in heaven I will be an artist. And I invite you to my first showing. Go down to Gold Street, turn left on platinum, right on silver, second mansion on the left.

[33 : 04] It's the one with the deck and the Starbucks coffee and bubble tea and it will say Stephen's Gallery. Then there's this a little more than pregnant hint.

The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. This is the tree of light on each side of the river of life that extends from the city. And the leaves of those trees are for the healing of the nations.

It's a vision, of course, from partly St. Phil and partly Genesis. But, what needs to be healed in the new heaven and new earth?

What if all heaven is continuous healing and renewal and growth? It's, I can, I can promise you it's not going to be boring.

You're not going to sing the same worship song 6,421 times and then repeat it. It's not going to be boring. What if it is all continuous healing, growth, and renewal?

[34 : 18] I think that's, I think that's a pregnant hint in the book of the Revelation. Some doctors say, well, there's no work for me in the new heaven and new earth. And I said, look, we're talking about stuff that's beyond our imagination, actually.

But what if heaven is continuous healing? So, I mean, again, we're at the limits. We just have a few sort of what I call pregnant hints.

Now, two marketing professors ask the question, will there be marketing in heaven? Are there any marketers here besides James? and me, too.

Here's an older market, I'm a marketplace professor, okay, an older marketplace theologian, Kenneth Concert, in a very fine set of books, actually, that were written, they're a bit out of date, but they're good.

By creation, human beings are social beings never intended to live alone. And because of our social nature, we are specialized. That means each person is in one sense unique.

[35 : 21] interdependent and therefore necessarily dependent on exchange. Exchange is built into our very nature, and this is business.

So, these two professors are saying that in the new heaven and new earth, it will be the home of righteousness. We're going to plant vineyards and build houses according to Isaiah 65.

All aspects of life will be transformed and redeemed when the Lord returns. And Richard Mao, former president of Fuller, says, the judgment that will visit the ships of Tarshish in Isaiah 60 is of a purifying sort.

And then, there will be limitless amounts of goods and services available for human use. Even if scarcity does not exist, there will be choices to make about the sequential ordering of activities.

To today, do I visit a star, or am I going to paint something? You don't know. I'm just guessing.

Okay. So, we'll need to process, if you're American, it's process, okay, process information and make decisions, even though we will know more, though we're not going to be on this yet.

[36 : 42] Okay? Okay? And, so, here you have the text here, and they're arguing that you're going to need marketers to help you make the choice, to make the connections between, okay, well, it's kind of a fun article, but maybe there's some seriousness in it.

I go to read from Revelation 21, the city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut. Marvel's picture in Revelation 4, too, heaven has an open door, whereas in Matthew the gates of hell are locked.

I think it was Lewis who suggested probably on the inside, if you really want to go to heaven, the door's open. But hell has gates that are locked.

There will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

[37 : 54] I had a wonderful pastor before I became a Christian and shortly afterwards. He was Welsh, Dr. Emlyn Davis.

If you know anything about wealth preaching, they get the hoil at a certain point, which means the Holy Spirit comes on them and your notes are gone and it's from then on, you're just transported. But he got colon cancer and died.

And his last words were, I know, my name is written in the Lamb's book of life. That's true for you. Revelation 22, 5 says, they'll reign with him age after age after age. What does that mean? well, it's a continuation of what he made us to be at the very beginning.

Coworkers with God, ruling with Jesus, taking care of things, developing their potential, expressing their inner meaning. All those wonderful things that were part of our constitution as being God's imaging creatures are going to be fulfilled as we reign with Christ age after age after age.

[39 : 19] So, in conclusion, kingdom work in this life is neither secular nor religious, but work that advances God's rule in all of life, enhancing human life, relieving poverty, bringing shalom to people and creation, and that work will last.

And in the new heaven, we'll be even more human than now, and able to love and serve God and our neighbors through fulfilling work without sin, and probably without pay.

You know, the inspiration of, one of the inspirations of C.S. Lewis with George MacDonald in the Keurig's Way to the Heath has this lovely picture of commerce taking place in heaven, where there's all kinds of exchange happening.

And he said, the amazing thing is that there's no money passed between them. It was just, I'll be turning, and you meet mine, and you know, a wonderful exchange. So I want to conclude with, I just

was reading a wonderful article by Leslie Newbigin last evening, but this is not where I found it. We commit ourselves, Leslie Newbigin said, without reserve, to all the secular work our shared humanity requires of us, knowing that nothing we do in itself is good enough to form part of that city, the city of God, the city's building, knowing that everything from our most secret prayers to our most public acts is part of that sin-stained human nature that must go down into the valley of death and judgment, and yet knowing that as we offer it up to the Father in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Spirit, it is safe with him and purged in fire, it will find its place at the end.

[41 : 25] well, I wouldn't be surprised if you had some questions or comments you wanted to make, so let's take a few minutes for some questions or comments and then I'd like to pray with us all.

Yeah, Bill. I'd like to like that last quotation. Because it deals with the problem that I think I have in deciding what is a good word.

In those rare times of repentance, when you look back on something, it's a good and instantly the question arises, why did I do that? Was it just to please others?

Was it just to oppress others? Was it just selfishness? Was it just evilism? And I don't have answers to that question. And I think you were saying, what are you saying, don't worry about it?

Yeah, don't worry about it. I think my answer would be, we don't know actually, for sure, what of this life will have eternal value.

[42 : 42] But I think we can say, it's a bit like Thomas Burden, such a beautiful prayer. He said, God, you know that I want to please you in everything I do, but I don't know that I am actually pleasing you in everything I do.

But, he went on in his prayer, and said, but I believe that the desire to please you actually does please you. and I want to have that desire in everything that I do.

Now, I think it's a beautiful prayer, because I think it really says, we don't know, completely, but I think we can say that some of what we are doing and have done in this life will last.

And I jokingly say certain things that I think I've done will be, but I don't know for sure. I'll probably be surprised. Thank you. We Protestants, correct me if I wrong, we've been a bit worried about lay up for yourself treasuring heaven.

We're told on the highest authority in there. What do we do with that verse? How do I lay up treasuring heaven? I'm speaking on this next Saturday morning, so it's a great text.

[44 : 03] Don't you wish Jesus actually explained it at that point? And then the same thing when a parable of the rich fool, you know, who is required this night, your soul is required of you, and such it will be for those who have laid up for themselves but are not rich towards God.

What does it mean to be rich towards God or to lay up for yourself treasures in heaven? And I pondered this, believe me, for 40 years. And I think the Bible gives us an answer.

But it's not a simple answer. But it is an answer. I think it is. I don't think it is simply giving money to religious causes or Christian causes, that that is laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven, because to kind of get it back or the result of it will last.

I don't think it means that. I don't think it means only doing what we used to call soul work, which is witnessing, preaching, evangelizing, all of which is very good to do.

But nevertheless, I don't think that is the meaning of laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven where moth and rust do not corrupt and thieves do not steal. it means something to do with the master thought of Jesus, which was the kingdom of God.

[45 : 28] That is God's wonderful shalom bringing rule into this life and this world. And I think as we are involved in investing in the kingdom of God in a holistic way, not just in terms of souls, but in a holistic way, I think that is what is going to be lasting and will be a treasure in the new heaven and earth.

But there's another dimension to it, and I think it comes out in the parable of the rich fool in being rich towards God. That rich fool had a lot of things going for him. I mean, he knew how to enjoy life, and a lot of Christians don't.

He was a steward in the sense that he didn't throw away his wealth. he said, look, it's amazing how fruitful this farm has been, so I need to build bigger barns.

I mean, not to be condemned for that, but everything was for him. Everything was for him. And I think that's the key to that story, and not rich towards God.

And I think that second dimension, besides kingdom engagement, which was the master conservative, the gospel of the kingdom of God is what Jesus preached, not the gospel of soul salvation.

[46 : 48] It includes soul salvation. That's the center. Okay, so what does it mean to be rich towards God? I think it means to be in love with God and to honor him and bless him.

And I love the, I quoted this yesterday for a few of you who were there, but Ken and Stanley Evans, who is an Anglican from England, said, the Christian is a controlled drunk, drunk, it's not a junk, a controlled drunk, purposefully intoxicated with the joy of God, which is continuously inspired in me by the Spirit.

Which is beautiful, I think. So I think it has that sort of double meaning. But I need an hour actually to develop that very well. Yeah. Yeah.

When you refer to a group of Christians who don't think it's worth caring for the present, then it does say just be a good steward of yours.

And I just thought, you know, I don't know what to ask them. Human beings, what people do with their resources on Europe affects everyone else.

[48 : 11] And, you know, I just think that because of a lot of things like oil spills and carelessness of, you know, smelting into people's water supplies and things like that and dropped in the water and the ground and all that, then it's a very dangerous thing.

And that causes disease which causes people to die sooner than they might die. So, you know, if that is expedited people's deaths by the purposes of what businesses choose to do rather than, you know, taking care of what they do in disposing of toxins and lakes and hormones which affects people's health, which causes cancer, and the rest of it, and the rest of them that goes.

So, I mean, it's all very critical what we do now while we're still on this earth with all pollution and our daily lives. Thank you.

I think what you say is quite true. Perhaps it needs to be balanced with the fact that some risks have to be taken. That doesn't excuse the massive destruction of the environment.

It does not excuse that. But I think we have to take some risks in doing what God has commanded us to do, which is to develop the potential of creation. I love the wilderness. This is the first year I haven't been on an extensive canoe trip.

[49 : 40] I gave up skiing last year, and I'm wondering if I have to give up canoeing this year. I'm getting old. I thank the Lord. I've skied since I was 12, and I haven't broken a bone.

So I gave my skis to my grandson. I said, that's it. I have a wonderful memory of my years of skiing, but I think it's a good time for me to give it up, so I'll take up snowshoe in this winter on Grouse.

By the way, anyone who's a senior here, you can get a year-long pass for Grouse Mountain for \$80. That means you can go up and down that flippin' gondola as many times as you want.

Have your lunch up there, and if you want, just walk around in the snow, or snowshoe, or ski. You can't ski, because that's a bigger thing. So I don't think we were meant, by God, to leave the entire planet as wilderness.

There are people in the environmental movement that would really sort of take that position, that we shouldn't be developing anything. So it's a mixed answer that I have to give to your very fine comment, which is that there are risks in doing it.

[50 : 42] And I'm thinking of an amazing conference, which Regent held about three years ago, or four years ago, I guess it is now, on the creation of wealth and the care of creation.

And they gave a case study on the tar sands on Friday night, which was a devastating case study of the effect of it. And then Saturday morning, the president of Shell Canada spoke, and he said, thank you very much for what you did last night.

Unfortunately, your data is out of date. And he went on to explain, yes, at the very beginning, we did some really not good things. But he said, now I can tell you what we're actually doing to conserve and to care for creation.

So, you know, there is another side to it. And even global warming is a complex subject. I don't think anybody would deny that there's climate change going on.

But in the last history of this amazing planet that we inhabit, there seem to have been quite a number of cycles of global warming and ice ages and so on.

[51 : 49] And it's hard to say, you know, in spite of a very famous film, we actually don't know that CO2 is causing global warming.

We actually don't know that. We know there's been a rise of CO2, and we know there's some global warming, but we don't know the correlation between those two. And that correlation is being made officially and publicly.

So, again, it comes back to, you know, many years ago, I preached a sermon on the resurrection.

And I said, maybe the scars that we have left on this planet will be like the scars on the body of Jesus, which in the new heaven and the new earth will not be any longer the marks of sin.

Because Jesus didn't say to his friends, put your finger here because this is what you did to me, but rather put your finger here and believe. They become marks of grace.

They become transfigured, if you like, transfigured stars. And I really believe that God can do that.

And does everything get healed in the new heaven and new earth?

[53 : 06] Interesting question. Maybe everything is progressively healed. Maybe there is a transfiguration of the stuff that isn't so good.

The marks we've left on our own bodies or our own emotions or our personality. My dear mother had a personality disorder which was never healed in this life.

She went on to be with the Lord. Wonderful and simple faith, which is not simple to get, of just referring everything to God. It's not simple to get that.

We call it simple faith, but boy, it's sure not simple. But I believe that she is being healed. So I think there's some, again, continuity between this life and the next.

And I think God took an enormous risk when he trusted us to be sub-creators. That's, Klaus Bach-Neil would never have said co-creation.

[54 : 11] He would have said, I don't know what you say, Jim, but Klaus would have said sub-creators. Sub-creators, which kind of says, he's the real creator and we're kind of working under him, which is really true.

So whether it's sub or co, I think he trusted us with that, took an enormous risk. But it's a risk that he can lead to redemption. Let's think of it.

I think I need to give Jasper another question. Thank you for this call. You always need me to ask some new answers and some new questions. I have trouble with the things like honor and glory.

You've given some very concrete examples of the kinds of things that we constitute honor and glory for, say, the kings of the earth.

But these are abstract concepts, right? We have some things that are not tangible that I wonder about, that having continuity in heaven.

[55 : 10] For instance, I am going to see that secret deck every time I think about this that you are built or have built. But you are basically a teacher.

And are you going to be carrying any of those skills? Or will there be any need for those skills? I'm going to finally retire. Or is it that kind of thing?

No, thank you. A very good question. I don't know the answer to it fully, but I can tell you this. I've been a carpenter, and I've also, as you know, been to some other things.

And one beautiful thing about working with your hands is at the end of the day, you can see what you've done. And believe me, it was really neat because I'd finish at 4.30 and I'd take my nail belt off and throw it into the trunk of my Chevy Nova that had a burned out, rusted out floorboard.

I didn't have to have a shower when I got home. I just need to go through a puddle. But I'd look back and I'd say, you know, we framed the second story today. Tomorrow it's the roof of the trusses.

[56 : 13] So you could see what you've done. I come to an end of the day now and I say, what have you done? What have you done? Amen. So, and that's true for most of us. Whether it's volunteer work or whether it's remunerated work, most of us don't actually see what we've done.

God sees. And he knows. And I think the sort of immaterial, you might say, things that we do are as meaningful to God and will be ultimately to us as the material things.

Now, if you make a meal, it's a fine meal, so on. Though it disappears. It disappears. And my deck is actually wrought. Okay? So, you know, there's another side of it.

Everything in this life is diminishing in some way. So, I think that in the new heaven and new earth, I think I'll be here.

Please never quote me. I think I'm going to be partly a teacher, partly an artist. I think I'll be partly an explorer.

[57 : 26] I love exploring. And, you know, there's going to be an entire universe. I mean, I don't know whether we're going to have our own rocket jets, you know, patched to our wings. I don't know.

But I think that the things we do in this life that are not substantial in the sense of material, I think are as meaningful to God as the things that are not material, if not more.

And so they, too, can be transfigured. Yes? I guess the verse, it says, I don't know where it gets out. I remember that the form of things will pass away and will not be remembered.

Yes. That's about your sins. I just mean the things on it. Because I mean, some things on it, I just want to remember. Yes, that's right. Yes.

I want to remember the past. Yeah, thank you. I think it's referenced really to that. God doesn't remember our sins. We do, actually. But he doesn't, which, you know, is really lovely.

[58 : 32] You know, I often think when you preach the gospel, it's just amazing. You know, that demons run for cover. People are liberated.

I think it was Louis Schmieds who once said, when we forgive, the enemy, what he said, the captive is set free, and the captive is usually ourselves.

When we forgive someone else, we're actually liberated ourselves. Well, it's five after ten. I thank you very much for your questions. I'll stay for a few more minutes, but I have to pick my wife up.

So, I've really enjoyed being with you, but I'd like to pray for us all. So, gracious God, we are just, we're amazed at the destiny that you have for your creation and your creatures.

It's awesome. And we bless you and love you for it. And we thank you that this world is not going to end with a fissile or a bang, but with the glorious second coming of your son, Jesus Christ.

[59 : 45] And the full consummation of the kingdom of God, judgment and making things right, and the purification of everything. And then this amazing future that you've carved out for us in a totally renewed heaven and earth.

God bless you for that. And while we admit and have confessed together that we don't understand very much about this connection between this life and the next, and we can only say we've seen some hints, some pointers, and we wonder whether this that we've done will last or that.

we do know, though, that both our life and our work is safe with you, Jesus. And I pray that every one of us will know that our names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.