

Work, Vocation & the Gospel

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 March 2026

Preacher: Kunle Adeyemo

[0:00] All right, good morning. I think it's 9.02 or 8.02 for those of you whose bodies are still adjusting to daylight savings.

! But I will go ahead and get started. We have quite a bit of ground to cover today. And so I will say welcome everyone to this new series on work, vocation and the gospel.

This class is a natural sequel to the Sunday School class on the doctrine of creation that we just concluded. And for those of you who may have not listened or at least as a good reminder before we start, in that class we began or Luke began, I should say, by exploring the different ways to understand the creation story.

Especially looking at ways we can remain faithful to core anchoring truths that I believe he referred to as non-negotiables. I think at some point in the class. Even as we hold them in tension to the contemporary and scientific accounts that are prevalent today.

Then after this, Nick turned our attention to the doctrine of the creation of man. Exploring or expounding what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God and the implications of that today.

[1:14] Now, John Hinkson built on that by discussing the cultural mandate that is given to man in Genesis 1, 26-27. And tracing how that mandate intersects with the arc of the gospel.

Creation for redemption and new creation. That class in many ways serves as the functional introduction to this one. And it's actually the bridge to this. So, if you haven't listened to it, Nick sent out a newsletter highlighting it.

I would, again, encourage you to do so. Because much of what we will discuss across this series will connect to themes that John introduced in that class. But, because it is that important, if I could attempt to paraphrase John here.

The cultural mandate, as he described it, derives from being created in the image and likeness of God. And it is essentially man's call to continue God's work of creative cultivation, which he, that is God, demonstrated in his work of creation.

So, how does that cultural mandate serve as a bridge to this class, this series? John may have said it implicitly, but I will attempt to do so explicitly for the sake of this class. Work, at its core, as I see it, is essentially how we go about fulfilling that cultural mandate that God has given to us.

[2:36] Or, in other words, how we continue to creatively cultivate God's good creation. Our goal, then, in this class, or in this series, I should say, is to unpack, over the next seven to eight weeks, what the concept of work in the broader context of the story of salvation looks like.

What is God's original intention and design for work? How sin and the fall corrupted and continues to corrupt God's grand design for it? And how, through the power of the gospel, our work can be and is redeemed today in a way that not just restores God's original design, but foreshadows and provides a foretaste of the fullness of what we would experience at the dawning of new creation.

My goal, specifically today, is to set the stage for the rest of the series by taking a closer look at God's original design for work, as revealed in the Garden of Eden.

And from there, if we have time, I will quickly sketch out the rest of the terrain that the remaining classes will cover. I'm not sure we will have time, but we'll try to get to that.

And then I stated in the announcement blurbs for the series, our guide will be this book, Every Good Endeavor, written by Tim Keller. Alex and I, who will be teaching this course together, will borrow liberally from this book as we teach this series.

[3:59] We will supplement some of its ideas with a few of our own, but we'll recommend getting the book and going through it as we go along, so that you can, in some way, start to engage the ideas, even be ahead.

We talked about setting a class atmosphere before people started coming in. You can read ahead and then come to class with questions that you have. So, with that, let us turn to the Lord in prayer to ask for his help as we begin to look at this topic together.

Father Lord, we thank you for creating work and making it the means through which we join you in tending the rest of your good creation.

Give us wisdom and insight as we look now into your work to explore your design for it. May that picture reveal to us ways you may be calling us now to reorient the work which we currently do to align with how you have made us and the purpose for which you made all things.

That is, for the praise and glory of your name. I ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Alright, so like I said, today we are going to be spending much of our time looking at God's original intention and approach to work.

[5:08] And it is helpful in that case to look at the context where work first arose. And so, I will ask you to turn with me your Bibles to Genesis 1, 26.

And I will read until the end of chapter 2. I may skip a few verses as we go. Because much of our class will be in some way like an exposition of these verses, Beth has kindly printed copies if you don't have your Bible.

And I will ask you to follow along as I read. And then at the end, I am going to ask the class a couple of questions around, what do you see from this passage pertaining to God's design for work?

And I will try and bring them all together after we do so. So, I will start. Again, I would say, I skipped a couple of verses. But anyway, if you are following in the passage, all I am going to read in the handout, all I am going to read is here.

Okay, so, starting from verse 26, Genesis chapter 1, it says, Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the livestock, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.

[6:20] And God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.

And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the hosts of them.

And on the seventh day, God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day, and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens. When no bush of the field was yet in the land, and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up, for the Lord had not caused it to rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground, and a mist was going up from the land, and was watering the whole face of the ground.

Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. And the man became a living creature. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.

[7:44] And out of the ground the Lord God made to spring up every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the Lord commanded the man, saying, You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat.

For in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die. Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.

And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.

So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept, took one of his ribs, and closed up its place with flesh.

[8:50] And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man, he made into a woman, and brought her to the man. All right. Hopefully as you were reading, you were thinking.

So now this is where I open up the class, to get your ideas. What does this passage, or what are some of the things you observed from this passage, about God's design for work?

Yes, ma'am. God all the time made, and everything he made perfect. Okay. You can see this to the perfection. Okay.

God made everything perfect. Yes. How did God, was the process by which God made everything perfect? But please, all right. Yes. How is that?

Yeah. Okay. With his work. Yeah. And with using man to take care of the field, and take care of the garden.

[9:53] Okay. So God created man to take care of the garden. Anything else? That's the problem of seeing when humans feel bigger than God.

Ah. That's how it is. Nobody, I mean, you can even, you know, we are a grasshopper. Yes. So sin, we will find later, corrupts God's work.

Yes. But, it's not in the passage today. Today is God's good design for work. What do we see? Yes. So work is good, it's a harsh part of our life, but it has limits.

Okay. Work is good, work has limits. Where do we see that, that work has limits? That work has limits. God rested from his work. Okay. God rested from his work.

Maybe God's work has limits. Why do we know that those limits apply to us? I should have mentioned, by the way, sorry, Susan, I should have mentioned, we see many ideas here that are amplified in the rest of scripture.

[10:59] So it's not, feel free if you have to defend to go outside of scripture. Yes. All right. All right. So we come in? Uh-huh. Yes. So we find out later that this was a specific pattern that God had for us, even though it doesn't say it so very explicitly in this passage.

What else? There's still quite a few more. What do we see or learn about work in the passage?

Well, Adam has administrative responsibilities.

Okay. According to verse 26. Uh-huh. So what does that mean about work in general? Well, every job I've ever had has a certain amount of administrative responsibility, even if it's very circumscribed.

Okay. Okay. Okay. So there are different elements or parts to the work that God gives us to do, is how I would generalize it. Ma'am. Can you perhaps fulfill God's purpose?

Work is meant to fulfill God's purpose. Did I hear that right, Ma'am? Yeah. Yeah. Okay. Yeah. I think that's fair. Yes. Again, Peter? Work isn't meant to be alone. Mmm. Like God created a helper.

[12:23] Yeah. I struggle to include that. But I think it is true. We will come back to that at the implications. But yes. Work is not meant to be alone. I agree.

I have a question. Do we have to rest for seven days? Do we have to rest? No, yeah. Like, you know, like special days.

Okay. Ma'am, I will again come back to that. Oh. We will. No, no, no. It's good. Do we have to? So over the course of the class, there's a lot of the questions that, the implications for which we will tackle.

Yes. Tackle. Yes. Alex, do you have? Okay. Anyone else? Josh? It seems like our work is meant to be an extension of God's authority or dominion.

Mmm. He says have dominion. Okay. Yeah. Over creation. Yes, indeed. We, in some way, work underneath God's work.

[13:21] And that, I think, we will see also in the rest of the passage. Yes, Richard? So the passage is not exclusively about work because in verse 28, he says, be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth and subdue it.

That's true. But increasing in number is not work. Yeah. So the cultural mandate of work is not the entire mandate that God gives us.

And I think we're just looking at that particular mandate of, you know, subdue the earth. And I think John talked about it actually quite a bit in his class.

But, yes, the entire mandate is not limited to work. Be fruitful and multiply is not essentially the work. But we're looking especially at the work element of it.

Anyone else? The multiply can be to make things better, to multiply good. Okay. Okay. Or you make it easier.

[14:23] Okay. I think, like, work is tending beauty but also functional. Ah. So, Lord God made us bring up every tree that is pleasant to sight and good for food.

Mm-hmm. Yeah. Yeah. I think, John, again, sorry, I keep referring to it.

I really recommend you listen to the class. I listened to it twice and I read it. The transcript, it is that good. John talked about it. He, like, the creative, the word creative cultivation in some way brings together those two ideas of both the beauty, the creativeness, but the cultivation bringing order to it. And so, yes, 100%. Okay. Yes? Yes, ma'am. God is in order. He perfectly ordered.

Yes. God's order. Our creative cultivation is actually patterned after God's way of work. Yes. So, God was also doing that ordering creation even after making it.

[15:32] All right. So, we have quite a number. So, I will walk through a couple of them just for comprehensiveness and then discuss what these observations tell us about the way God designed work to operate.

I think, first of all, God worked, I think somebody may have said, and delighted in his work. We see this in verses 2, in chapter 2, verses 1 to 3. There is an inherent goodness to work, but it is something that God did and God enjoyed.

It is in contrast with the perspective and myths of some of the ancient Greeks and also in some quarters today, which we will talk about later.

The second is that it's not at least obvious because our Bible is in English, but I think Tim Keller in his book talks about how the word that was used to describe God's work was pedestrian work.

It was a pedestrian work. It was the same word that was used to describe human work. God, in creation, was willing to get his hands dirty.

[16:31] And he literally got his hands dirty in forming man from the dust of the ground. And so, there is an essence in which God work is, it's not just, there is not a humbling aspect of work, but work takes on a great range of forms.

And God's work spans that range from what we did creative to the actual manual and practical. And all of those, all that work is good. The next one somebody mentioned was work is done, I think, in rhythms.

That's what Susan was talking about, like this, rhythms of work and rest. We see this dimly in each day. We didn't read Genesis 1, but we see that dimly in Genesis 1.

Then we see it a bit more clearly in Genesis 2, verse 3, in the sense of God's work. But as I discussed, it comes to life more fully as we go further in Scripture.

And then the explicit pattern in Exodus 20 is where it's set before us. And it states in verse 18, remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.

[17:38] On it you shall not do any work. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

I read this and I thought it was funny. God, I don't think this is exactly what he's saying, but it sounded like, I made the heavens and the earth in six days. You can rest from your work because you're not making the heavens and the earth.

I don't think that's exact. But it's like, yeah, you know, like how busy can you be that you cannot rest on the seventh day? A thought to consider. If we keep moving in the passage, we will also see that work was something that God created man to do and something that God calls him to do.

And we see this in chapter 2, verse 15. And I will just try and find it here. It said, The Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.

Work was part of our original creation and purpose. And we will in some way come back to that later. Then next, we are designed to benefit from and enjoy the fruit of our work.

[18:44] We see this in chapter 2, verse 16. And it's a point that while it begins here, it's amplified in scripture. I think you all may be familiar when Paul picks this up.

Deuteronomy picks this theme up about do not muzzle an ox while it is shredding the grain. And Paul, twice in the New Testament, picks this pattern up that the idea that we are, it's a good thing to be able to enjoy and reap the fruits of your work.

And that's how work has always been. And so God, in asking the man to tend the garden, also encouraging him to eat of its fruit. Yes, ma'am. In heaven, we're going to walk too.

Yes, that was a point that John made as well. Yes, indeed. We're going to walk. It's not going to be singing and, you know, all kinds of that. No, you know what I mean.

Yeah, yeah, no, no, no. It's thinking, oh, more, more. We're going to be busy. Yes. Yes, indeed. And then finally, someone mentioned that we are called to a variety of work.

[19:45] I think Sarah, that was the point. I think Richard, it's Richard, right? Yes. Okay, yeah. Like Richard, you mentioned the administrative component of work. We see in this passage, Adam called to different kinds of work.

He's called to creative work in naming the animals. He's also called to manual, practical work in 10 in the garden. There is a spectrum and a variety of work that God designs us to do.

And then I think Peter mentioned a point that I didn't want to make too much of, but I do think it's very important that work was designed to be done in community, in a sense.

I think community is a strong word because, you know, here the pattern, the bigger pattern at the core of this passage is marriage and the partnership in marriage. But I think it was a point that embedded in the nature of work helps us to see that that social component of work is a critical component.

Actually, studies have shown that for those who go back to work, who may not even need to go financially for work, especially those who have rich retirement age, the social and meaning component of work is a primary driver of why many go back to work.

[21:00] So that part is definitely something that is worth us to consider. So how do these observations together tell us about the way God designed work to operate in a way that I think we can in some way engage on today?

I think, first of all, work is good. I said that before. God's working and delighting in his work reminds us that there is an inherent goodness to work for it is something God did and enjoyed.

I think, okay, I guess it comes in the second one. The second one is that we were created to work. I think it's, the Lord God made man in some way to tend the garden.

If you read that, when he said, when, when it, in some way we start the narrative and talking about the creation of man, it talks about, you know, when there was no fruit or no shrub coming up in cultivation because there was yet no man to work the land.

And God made man and God planted him in the garden to work the garden. We were made to work and work thus is a critical component of a meaningful life.

[22:12] Now, while work may take on different forms in different stages of our life, it is a key part of it.

A life purely of pleasure and leisure, while often romanticized sometimes, is a life at risk of being devoid of meaning. We were designed to work and it's not something we have to do, but what we were created to do.

So, if we are offered dreams of a life without any kind of work, sometimes that's the AI, the AI mantra. That dream is not, in some way, it's almost more closer to hell than heaven. In part because if you think as a, ma'am, I don't think I remember your name. Is it Julia? Oh, yeah. Julia? Yeah, yeah. Okay, yes. Working or serving. Yes. You can serve all made around. You know, not necessarily a serving. Serving community, serving anything. Yes. Yes, ma'am. But as Julia had said earlier, that if, as John put it in his class, that work will continue in the new heavens and new creation that God will bring about.

[23:24] You can then imagine, by definition, life without any form of work cannot be heaven. And if it is not heaven, I leave it to your imagination what that life is exactly.

Maybe it is in hell that people don't work. They just suffer. But work is meaningful and is critical to the meaningful component of a life worth living.

I think third is that God called man to work. Man did not define or create his own work, but responded to God's call to work. Now, underneath this is a couple of ideas that I think came up in the course of our discussion.

First is that this work has a variety of forms. It's intellectual work, practical work, and neither of them set up intention against the other or as one being superior.

And that goes a grain to grain of our world today, where depending on where we sit on that divide of intellectual work, white-collar work, or blue-collar work, we often tend to magnify one and demean the other.

[24:37] We see both of them coming together in the garden, and it's also coming together actually in God's own work itself, not necessarily just in man's work.

And so we are reminded that there is no superiority in either of these kinds of work. But that said, even though we are called to a variety of work, Adam was still called to particular work.

Now, you will notice that Adam was called to tend to a specific garden. He wasn't called necessarily to feed the birds of the air or the fish in the sea.

He was called to tend the garden. And so maybe perhaps as humanity became fruitful and multiplied and filled the earth and subdued it, that broader mandate would have been picked up as it is in the variety of work.

But if you look at Adam particularly, he was called to specific work. And thus, it is a reminder to us that there may be a variety of things that we are, but we are called to specific work.

[25:44] I don't want to go too deep in this because this is something that I think Alex, in his class next week on work as a calling, will speak in more detail about. In particular, as it relates to the idea that what God called Adam to, I mean, Alex, I'm speaking on your behalf, but I imagine, what God called Adam to was what is seemingly secular work.

But it's actually in contrast to what we think about calling today. Adam was called to work the garden. And it was a great cry of the Reformation that all God, all work is God's calling to work.

It's not all good work, I would say. It's God's calling to work. There is no special class for spiritual work that the people in the church do. We can all be called to the work that we're doing.

But I will leave Alex to expand on that later. Next, and I think this goes deeper into what Susan had mentioned. This work that we are called to do came with constraints that were designed to remind us that we are not masters of our own selves.

But our work is underneath a greater work, which is God's work. And our work is ultimately directed to the person who calls us to work. I think we had, in one of the sermons in the past, in the series that we're currently going to, the idea that when you are called, like being a steward of resources, you are called to do and manage them on behalf of someone.

[27:17] And we see these constraints that God has given. God put constraints in place in work, even in Eden, as a reminder of that reality, that we do not work as unto ourselves, but unto somebody, unto God who made us.

And there are two, these constraints we see in two specific places. First, in the Sabbath. We talked a little bit about the Sabbath. And then secondly, we see it in the restriction God gives Adam to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

But because we generally chafe at the idea of constraints, we all think about, you know, best life is a life with all options and unconstrained.

I can do whatever I want. But, I mean, as some of you know, there is this thing called the paradox of choice, right? Like if you are presented with too many options, you actually, it's harder to make decisions than when you are given a set of constrained choices.

So even though we chafe at the sound of constraints, it is within the scope of these constraints that we are designed to enjoy and find meaning in our work.

[28:29] So if we look at the Sabbath, for example, we know that rest is good because being finite creatures is good for our recovery. But this rest was patterned after God's rest.

And God, as we know in Psalm 121, neither slumbers nor sleep. So the primary purpose of this rest as a pattern is not just rest, physical rest, as it is, even if we look at Exodus 20, where it talks about the Sabbath is unto the Lord.

The goal of rest, it came at the end, at the seventh day, almost as a sense that it is a pointer to an end to work. Now, end here I use not in the sense of chronological end, like it's finished, but in the teleological sense, in which there is an end as a purpose to which work is designed and oriented. When we enjoy the Sabbath, the goal of the Sabbath is meant to point us to an end to work, an end and a purpose and not a meaninglessness. And I think Keller points out this in his book around when he talks about leisure, that good leisure allows us to see and appreciate and reflect on the beauty and the purpose and the end of work.

It's not really just, oh, I'm tired, I need a break after six days of work. It's actually an opportunity for us to step back and see this greater purpose of rest.

[30:01] And then furthermore, this is pre-fall or pre, yeah, this is even before the fall. After the fall, this idea of rest takes on an even bigger perspective in the rest of scripture.

Hebrews talks about it ultimately, and I think picking up on Psalm 95, this idea of rest, that when we enter God's rest, we rest from our own labor. And that I think we're talking about in this series on Galatians, that ultimately we rest from our works in God's completed work.

And that pattern was already set in the garden and set in this idea of Sabbath. So the Sabbath is not really just physical rest, but this idea of an end to work and an end, like I said, in the teleological sense, which means work, we can see work as purposeful and meaningful when we see it through the lens of the rhythms God has designed for work and rest, as revealed in the Sabbath.

Then the second constraint we see in 2.17, where God gives man a command not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Now, presumably that restriction did not mean that man was not allowed to tend the tree.

Remember, that tree was in the garden, and Adam was called to tend the garden.

[31:25] Yet he was forbidden to eat from that tree. And depending on how you think about it, some commentators say there was nothing really special about that tree as it was meant to be a symbol of the constraints around which God had set man to work.

It reminded Adam, whenever he tended that tree but not eating of it, that his work was as a subject of somebody who was greater. But if you notice, that restriction does not constrain Adam from enjoying everything else in the garden.

And that, like, satisfying the restriction of, I will not eat from this tree did not mean, oh, now I'm suffering. He could eat from whatever tree. He could eat from the tree of life, from all these other trees, as long as he remembered that this tree, that knowledge of good and evil was a tree that he was forbidden from eating.

Yes, ma'am. I have a question about that. Yes. So, as well as the point of his authority over Adam, would it not be important that he not eat of that tree because when he did, he had to leave?

Yes. But, yeah. That tree, I mean, it was, it was even more than, it was as well, as well as God's authority, that tree held a door open that was shut down because he chose it.

[32:59] Yeah, I think there are two elements in which we can talk about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Like there could be, like I said, some commentators would say, I said, some would say there was nothing special about the tree.

Some may say there was something special about the tree. Regardless of whether there was something special about the tree or not in a practical sense of what it did, there was a bigger point to the tree. And that was, at the very least, it would remind Adam that you are not the commander of this garden.

Right. You, this garden, you are putting here to work underneath the command of someone. And I'm, knowledge of tree opened the door to the earth of science.

And a lot of people don't believe that. Yeah. Maybe, I don't know. No, I think, I'm trying to avoid the conversation around the elements of the tree because I do think that regardless of what you think about the purpose of the tree, the bigger purpose of the tree still stands.

Yes, ma'am. Could it be also obedience and honoring God? I mean, God is asking that, of course, you're going to honor and be obedient. Yes, exactly.

[34:10] Yes. So the point is that the signifying obedience is how we, we work underneath God. It's like a symbol of man's status relative to God.

We are not gods of our own selves. We are created underneath someone to work. I think, yeah, so we see this point, by the way, picked up in different parts of scripture later on.

This idea that even though we enjoy the benefits of our work, there are portions of the benefits of our work that are restricted to us somewhat as a reminder that the work is not ours.

We see in the Old Testament this idea of the tithe that was God's portion in the things that he had given them. Presumably, again, a way I'm not saying there's one-to-one correlation, but this idea that there are reminders in the work that we do and the fruit of our work, even though we can enjoy it, that remain to God.

When God, beyond even the tithe, right, when God was giving the Israelites laws about harvest, they were not to harvest to the very edge of their field and harvest every little grain. They were meant to leave things as they went, things that fell off.

[35:22] It gained that idea that there was a portion in our work that does not belong to us. As we think about that, regardless of what you believe today about tithe or not, there is a sense that of the work that we do, all of the fruit does not belong to us because it's a reminder that our work comes from someone else.

prayer. Prayer. Prayer. You have time for God. Prayer. Prayer is very important. Yeah, that is fair. So what's the definition of work? Ah, what is the definition of work? I thought I said it implicitly in the beginning, but I think it's a good one and I will call it back.

I will go back to that. I think work is the way we continue God's mandate in this creative cultivation of the world today. That is work. That is how we were meant to fulfill the cultural part of that mandate.

Like Richard mentioned, there are multiple parts of this mandate that he gave in 126 to 27, and that's what we would unpack in Genesis 126 to 27. That part of continuing his creative cultivation of the world is work.

[36:33] work. How we do that is what's work. Now, that definition, though, I would say is not complete. It's not complete because the New Testament picks up more.

There is almost like a component of that element that we see more clearly in the New Testament, but I want to hold that thought for when we then come back to what is added to that definition of work, that the New Testament really, really amplifies.

Josh, you had a question? This might go wrong with that, but we touched on the end of the purpose, the telos of work, but I wasn't clear on did we come down on that somewhere?

Did we define that? The purpose of work. That was the last. Well, the purpose of work I mentioned earlier in the prayer, but it was actually the subject of Nick's last class in the previous series.

The purpose of all is for God's ultimate glory. That's the end of all creation. Okay, you did say that. Yes, but yeah, no, I think.

[37:39] Okay, so if this is what work was meant, let me pause because before we transition to the rest of this class, any further questions?

I have tried to take a few as we went along. No? Okay. I'm going to write it down to daylight savings. People are still booting. It's still 840.

It's 840. Yes, Sarah. Yes. Just to provide a perspective to like maybe thinking about the scope of work as broader than just vocation, but, you know, some of like, let's say, I'm hearing people and other things just to throw some kind of other perspectives out there.

Yeah, so. I mean, all that falls under what you said, but just to kind of make it explicit. So, no, I agree. We will notice it says nothing about, I mean, even though we are enjoined to benefit from the work, it says nothing about being paid for the work.

And so sometimes people are like, ah, if the work I'm not paid is volunteer, like being a stay-at-home parent. Well, you could even say that the Bible shows that that is really work. There was a stay-at-home parent who was actually paid to be a stay-at-home parent in Scripture.

[38:51] Do you know who that is? Somebody who was paid to be a parent. Was it Moses' parents? Exactly. Moses' mom was paid to be a mom.

In some way, like, so if you argue that, like, it's not paid, well, it has been paid in Scripture. And, like, I mean, for those of us who work, who keep our kids in daycare, we pay people to care for our kids.

So even though there's not necessarily a, to your point, a financial exchange in that, like, this is work. Because even children are the gifts of God, and we are called to cultivate them in some way. I mean, we use different words because they are human beings. But in the way of the Lord, and that creative cultivation that is done as parents is part of God's design for work.

Even though you could argue that because it's a special class, we call it something else. We call it parenting. But it is as much work as regular work as most people who have kids will attest.

[39:56] I think from a worldly standpoint, being a stay-at-home mom for a number of years, raising my kids, I had to finally realize, instead of always defending myself, like, you know, people would say, oh, it must be nice.

Yeah, it's a joy. You know, it's wonderful. Was that the day that my value is equated to a paycheck written by someone of this world totally negates my value as a child of God.

And there's no connection. And when you can finally, when I could, at least me, could finally, clearly, I stopped defending myself as, well, I'm not working right now, but I will again someday. I've been working since the day I was born, and I will until the day I die for God's glory. And that's all I was doing. And that was really important for me. So, you know, when you say what the work is, it's all for His glory.

And it's, we benefit from us, but He didn't have to give us all those benefits that He gave us. He could have said, I don't want you to eat anything out of the garden. Just go and take care of it in order to get the dog else to get it.

[41:02] Exactly. I mean, but, you know, in our sin, obviously, that's the whole other part. We mess it all up. Yeah. Okay. Even like retirement, you know, just different phases of life work can take a very different picture than just, you know, plan-cluded vocation or whatever we think of traditionally, just calling that out.

I agree. Yes, ma'am? And parenting is not the most important. It's certainly most important, very important, and, it's 24, you know, 24-7, but it's, it's, yeah.

Yeah. I think it's the most important thing that we are called, I think we are the most, it's the most important thing that we are called to do because everything else we have to do are dealing with things that will pass away.

But the souls of the kids that we are giving are eternal. Like, we are human beings and caring for people, actually, I would say, maybe more extendedly, right? Like, people are the one eternal thing that we walk around and exchange, and engage with, and I think engaging with eternal, I think, is definitely important.

All right, so, if this is the design for work, we can see that there are many elements of this design that still resonate, or still, we can think about as we consider work today.

[42:25] Even though sin has corrupted, sin in its, sin actually corrupts much of what was God's original design for work. If we go back to the list that I had, right, like, what did it mean?

That, you know, the idea that work is good is corrupted by sin, like people think, and there is work that is evil, and it's evil because, you know, men have in their desire for some of the other

characteristics of good work have corrupted the goodness that is in work.

work being good is corrupted by sometimes, like, meaningless work, droning on work, or, you know, we probably have, like, working in sweatshops, or labor that the corruption of sin has seeped into God's design.

Work being really fruitful, so if we see the garden, the Bible talks about God planting a garden that yielded so much fruit, and then Adam was just called to tend, and then after they sinned, the first thing God tells Adam is that the ground will no longer be fruitful, that by the sweat of his brow, the idea that we sometimes labor so much to produce only very little, that is a function of sinning, and it's a reality that we still live in today.

I think our desire to define and create our work, it is the mantra of today. You can be everything you ever wanted to be, like, your mind is the limitation.

[44:05] You can, of course, identify the good that people are trying to point to in some of that, like, John also mentioned in this class about being good cultural critics that recognizing the good in some of these things, and yet the corruption of sin, but yet, as we find out in the garden, that is actually not true.

We are designed to be all that God calls us to be, and the work is figuring out what God calls us to be. I think there's a quote, I forgot to look it up, that Einstein said, or it's attributed to Einstein, that if a fish spends all his time trying to, like, climb a tree, you may think he was made for nothing, but that's because that's not where the fish was designed to operate.

And so some of that idea of recognizing the constraints of which the work that we have been called to do, what God has called us to do is where work has always been fruitful and flourish.

everybody has different work, you know, everybody is important, so somebody is saying mindless work, but everybody is different. Yeah, that's fair.

Beth? It seems like work is sort of this way of participation in creation, and when we are working as unto the Lord, or we think working pre-fall mentality, it sort of is both an expanding of us and a cultivating of us, as well as expanding and cultivating God's created order.

[45:42] I think we like, we grow, I guess would be a simple way to say that. I think what seems to enter in through the fall is exploitation. Like, even when we're toiling and it's not yielding much harvest, it's sort of like exploiting, and then when we think about the interpersonal power dynamics and whatnot, there's often just that entrance of exploitation as opposed to cultivating.

Yeah. I think that's fair. I think that sense of exploitation, I think, connects quite well to this idea of not all the often results when we are trying to get everything we can from the work that we do.

But the idea that, like I mentioned, work had originally always been designed in some way for there to be a part of our work that is not really for us or about us.

And I think in relating to that, I think your point around exploitation and where some of that comes from and a desire to grab and hold on to everything that we can, I think definitely stems from that.

Yes, Christina. Could we also expand the topic of children to spiritual children and discipleship for those who don't have children and yeah, kind of outside of them?

[47:03] Yeah, I think so. But in that case, you could even think about that work as almost directly spiritual work, which we would actually recognize today as spiritual work of people who disciple others.

In some churches, they even have positions of spiritual director or something. So, yes, we can because we already do so in any case. Okay.

All right. So, we were talking about other ways in which sin corrupts God's grand design. I think I was talking about the idea that we are the masters of our own work and I think this idea is a sinful idea.

We are created to work as God calls us to work and we need to be figuring out what does that mean to be called. And again, that I think is a topic we will discuss in the next class.

Work also, as Keller talks about in his book, becomes selfish. It becomes all about us. It downstream of that idea of being masters. And he uses the Tower of Babel as an example of that selfish, self-oriented, self-glorifying element of work that was not designed in the beginning.

[48:21] And so, over the course of this class, we will talk about this part of work, like going into detail and how work has been corrupted and

how then ultimately landing at how the gospel redeems work.

The gospel gives us a new narrative for work and a new power and a new purpose for the work that we do. And maybe to the point that I mentioned earlier, in the gospel, and that's the addendum to the definition of work that I said in the beginning, in the gospel we see work repeatedly being talked about in the context of service to others.

And so, you could argue that it is sort of embedded in that creative cultivation that I defined earlier, but it's not as explicit. That work is continuing this work of God's creative cultivation.

work in the service of others. And that lens of working to serve others is a lens that we will come back to in the final phase of the purpose of work.

Paul admonishes he that steals should steal no longer, but work with his hands. Not so that he can stop stealing to satisfy, but so that he may have something to give.

[49:40] Because actually working was a way to transform stealing from taking to give everything. Because work is meant to be done in service of others.

In fact, we will talk about that in the latter part of the class, about the gospel's redemption of work.

So, yes ma'am. God doesn't like pride.

Very, very against God. So, somebody working for, you know, for pride, yeah, God doesn't like pride. Yeah, no, absolutely.

And that embracing that humility that comes with work is also something that, to Julia's point, the New Testament picks up. I think Paul mentions, I think it's in Thessalonians, like, you know, aspire to live a quiet life and to work with your hands.

Not because working with your hands, in some way that, because in that culture working with our hands was seen as, you know, second grade to working with your minds in the Greek and the Roman culture of the day.

[50:46] And so that humbling aspect of the humility that comes with service, I think is something that is part of the new narrative of how we should think about work.

So I think I will end there unless there are more questions. Yes, Richard. If work is good, and I agree, is unemployment a great evil?

I think it would depend on what the drivers of the unemployment are. Yeah, I think it depends.

What's causing the unemployment?

Well, most economists would agree that a certain level of unemployment is desirable. Yeah, I think that that is, I don't know then that it's, so I think it depends on how you define unemployment and the context in which when they talk about unemployment, I think they generally talk about paid employment.

So unemployment in that regard maybe you could debate, but whether you are paid or not, people who work at home, I don't think are technically, I don't know how they are accounted for in the unemployment numbers, but we've talked about, right, like that is still work in God's eyes.

[52:13] So I don't know. I think there's a clear yes or no to that answer. I think it really depends on the kind of the unemployment and the reasons for it.

Oh yeah, that's true. That's also a reason why people can be unemployed. All right, well, thank you for coming.

If you have any questions, happy to stay behind till 10 and answer them, but otherwise we'll see you next week.