

Redeeming Time: A Working Faith Sept 13 15E

We're into a series called Redeeming Time. Last week we looked at a basic Christian living principle...pick up the yoke or teaching of Jesus His way leads to rest for our souls for He is humble and gentle. Does anyone remember the example we found from Christ or the Scripture?

Jesus received His direction and power from the Father...so should we.

Redeeming Time begins with staying tight with the Father.

Keep our appointments with the Father and obey God along the way.

Today we're going to look at Christian living as it relates to **work time**.

Not long after I began full-time work, I was introduced to planners. Being the first-born instilled with the value to be responsible, I delved into the world of productivity. I got myself a Franklin...based on principles that Benjamin Franklin lived by. It forces a person to evaluate their priorities. It gets people to realize that if they fail to plan, they plan to fail. Well...yes and no. It all depends

on who's calendar you're working. If you are the master of your ship, you may reach your goals. Though I'd add, 'Lord willing'.

Q. How do you handle interruptions when at work?

Interruptions in the Workplace

A study found that school principals spend around one-third of their day attending to interruptions. The study showed that most principals were interrupted, on average, between 25 and 28 times a day. Dr. Ross Thomas, who oversaw the project, said, "I don't see that there is anything wrong with principals being interrupted because it is part-and-parcel of the job—schools are people-oriented organizations. Much of the time-management literature implies that interruptions are to be avoided at all costs, but this is absurd. Very few time-management authors concede that there is value in the interruptions, but they should realize that a lot of fun lies in the challenge of everyday interruptions." He suggests that principals try, not to avoid interruptions, but to manage them better.¹

Consider the following statement:
Either we end of driven, racing against time to make our mark or we learn to follow the scent of

¹ "Research Shows Impact of Interruptions at Work," *Smiths Online* Vol. 39, Number 4, 27 March 1998, <www.une.edu>.
² Robert J. Morgan, *Nelson's Complete Book of Stories, Illustrations, and Quotes*, electronic ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000), 473.

eternity in our hearts and sanctify some of our time or “taste heaven in our daily bread” Mark Buchanan

I haven't found a place in Scriptures yet, where God asked for an appointment. But He prepares people so that they are ready to respond to 'divine interruptions'. Last week we saw how Jesus handled an interruption from His newly recruited disciple. He took the opportunity to tell Simon His direction and purpose. (Preach)

I. Here's the first biblical work time principle. **We have a working God.**

*Unlike other ancient religious writings, which regarded creation as something beneath the dignity of the Supreme Being, Scripture unashamedly describes God as a “worker”.*²

Ps 19:1-2

The heavens declare the glory of God;

the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Day after day they pour forth speech;

night after night they reveal knowledge.

Isaiah 45:9

“Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, ‘what are you making?’ Does your work say, ‘He has no hands’?”

God sent His Son to earth to do a work of salvation - to die for the bride of all nations. It is unimaginable for us to realize what Christ had to put down...to humble himself for human form. Jesus stayed on task to seek and save the lost. John 4:34 “My food, said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. The work of atonement was finished at the cross. God's salvation work continues today as the Holy Spirit convicts and guides people to faith in Christ (John 16:13) and grows believers into His kingdom family. What's cool is that He involves us in His work.

So is it any surprise then, that since God is a working God and made us in His image (Gen 1:26), He made us to work.

II. Work is godly.

Gen 1:27 - *God made people to rule

Gen 1:28 - *God Blessed (fruitful & rule well)

Gen 1:31 - Very Good

Gen 2:15 - serving, managing, obeying specific instruction...good

² Eugene E. Carpenter and Philip W. Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 424.

By the time I entered the full time work force, career changes were becoming more normal and self-employment was on the grow. My university education came to a halt after my first degree. I still needed another year to become a Phys. Ed teacher but cutbacks in BC eliminated most openings for that training. I was married, had a university degree and wasn't finding much work that summer. I was too educated..."go to Vancouver", they said. By September I came to a crossroads. I could wear a suit and make good money selling insurance - working evenings and many weekends away from Darlene. Or I could work in a turkey plant for regular pay and regular hours. Darlene and I reaffirmed that our marriage goals did not make money king. ***Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth*** that won't last anyway. So I took the turkey job. As it turned out, my wrists gave out tucking turkey legs into their butts. I was doing odd jobs here and there for a while so my wrists could recover and Doug, my supervisor came to see me. The man with the orange helmet said, "Brad, it takes a special person to work here. You're more

of people person. You should be in something else like sales." He kind of said it like...go, be free to **work in your strengths** (bonus).

Well, I did end up selling books to businesses and schools for 5 years. It was a multi-faceted job. There was people service, product, shipping/receiving, bookkeeping, supply and demand...all kinds of things. I also learned that the things I didn't want to do naturally (like find a new customer and cross off the ones who never bought) brought greater rewards in the long run...because it stretched me as a person and stretched my business. I became more efficient with my time and my supplier rewarded me with new territories when they became available.

But money wasn't my real motivator.

Why did I want to do a good job and keep growing? It was more than environment and personality. I was accountable to the Lord...my real boss.

III. Christ is our real boss

Read Colosians 3:23-25

23 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters,

24 since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. 25 Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for their wrongs, and there is no favoritism.

“The Lord’s work” isn’t just preaching and evangelizing. God’s work can be weeding a garden, picking fruit, writing music, stacking lumber, adding up the offering, putting the kids to bed, filling a prescription, putting your cloths in the hamper, doing the dishes, preparing a Sunday School lesson, or serving a teen burger with a smile. The apostle Paul did not consider it beneath him to work hard with his hands (1 Cor 4:12).

What if we began dedicating our work time as an offering of worship to God? It’s so easy to slip from a heart of thankful devotion to a mind of duty. But consider Romans 12:1-2.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able

to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Any work God leads us to is dignified by the Lord Jesus...whom we ultimately serve. That is our already/not yet experience as Christians. The impact we make today echoes for eternity but we don’t fully realize that until we’re done with these limited earthly shells. There will be rewards and withholding rewards in heaven - whether the work received good wages and respect on earth or not.

A Word about a very special work – parenting.

Church, let us be part of the solution...to come along side families, devastated by the last 50 years. Parenting is perhaps the most impacting work in our society and in turn...the church.

God had many lessons to teach me those 5 years. But the ach in my heart to be part of a work that directly impacted people for Christ was also growing. God knows the desires of our heart and what we really need. Jesus promises, **Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness...**and all these things, the basic needs you have

will be taken care of as well. Doesn't he make spectacular clothing for the meadows in the mountains...that are here today and gone tomorrow? How much more valuable are we to God, than a piece of land? Jesus died for us.

I did have the honor of working as a PE teacher, coach and athletic director in a Christian school so I got to share my faith too.

Work Cautions

1. Work is so good for us that we have to be careful that our whole identity is not wrapped up in what we do for work. Let us not forget that by faith we are already sons and daughters of God in Christ (Gal 3:26). Our #1 identity: Child of God

2. Resist equating work production with earning God's grace. Many religions are based on that. Many are enslaved by keeping score. Good works flow from our faith in God's grace, not the other way around. God is so holy and righteous, it is really an insult that we could measure up based on our merit. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Read Eph 2:8-10.

So certainly God has a working plan for us...in and through Jesus Christ.

3. Also resist the worlds formula's for success. They either leave God out altogether: 'x' work ethic and 'y' attitude equals 'z' success. Where's God?

Or use God as a genie...taking scripture out of context to promote material blessing from God by the power of their spoken word.

What about Retirement?

I believe the concept of retirement in our society gives people permission to reassess their life goals and adjust their pursuits in an official way – so all associates, family and friends know it and adjust their expectations too. But really – if you are keeping your appointments with the Father, this has been going on internally all along...recalculating what is of most value. Luke 12:16-21 reminds us that it is not permission for the Christian to become self-absorbed and lazy. The hope of Christ is that you can still get on the right path. Many of the great men and women of the Bible were used powerfully by God in their senior years.

Read Gen 2:18-22

And the man woke up and said,
“WOO...MAN!”

Eve, the fellow worker is so suited to Adam that God also institutes the idea of an exclusive marriage relationship at the same time. *“Eve was created from under Adam’s arm to be protected and from near his heart to be loved”* (William MacDonald)

As God created a helper for Adam, so we must consider work can nurture relationship.

Remember in Gen 1:28, the charge to rule was given to both man and woman. Work is a means to glorify God and serve together. God made the church so interdependent that in the Bible it is compared to a human body working together (Rom 12:4-6).

IV. WORK BUILDS COMMUNITY

When we plan and tackle projects together it creates a common experience of ‘overcoming’ and cooperation...it builds community spirit. We learn more about each other (breaks down walls, builds trust, humor-laughter, sharing issues-prayer). We learn more about our strengths and weaknesses so we have greater wisdom to see how we fit together.

It’s amazing how important a simple cup of cold water or a meal is when you have been fully focused on a labor intensive task. Sometimes all we need is some company...or to even just have someone stand on the right spot (flooring work). Its okay to experience other roles than we’re used to in a project because it gives us greater appreciation for someone who is particularly suited to that work (did a bit of ceiling mud and sanding). Amazing things happen when we share a chapter of life together because God made us for community.

Benevolent work is especially good. God commanded the Israelites to be benevolent...to set aside work and food those less able and new immigrants. This is also reflected in the history of the church. I commend attempts to help the less fortunate to get back on their feet...to give people the rod so they learn how to fish...to help establish a healthy pattern of work and especially, peace with God.

V. Work Is Witness

Col 4:5&6

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every

opportunity. Let your conversations be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Remember that some sow seeds, some water and some reap. Each communication we have while working can be refreshing and edifying, even preserving goodness in society. Most of all we can point to Christ.

Let us pray for wisdom and grace so that our interactions with

others during work would be refreshing and insightful; turning hearts toward Jesus. God promises that if we're put on the spot for our faith, He will give us the right words...but stay in the Word!

I. We have a working God II.
Work is godly III. Jesus is our boss IV. Work builds Community V. Work is Witness

Work for Jesus. And may God give us what we need for work to grow more like Him.