

“THE FRUIT OF OUR LABOR.”

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First Christian Reformed Church

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Scripture Texts: Psalm 127:1-2; 128:1-2; I Corinthians 4:7; 15:10; Colossians 3:23-24

Prayer: Holy Father, God of all creation and all vocation, on this Labor Day weekend, bless both our work and our rest from work. Use all that we do for your glory. My work now is to proclaim your Holy Word. I need your help and wisdom. Though I am a sinner make me a pure channel of your grace that your people may be edified with spiritual food and drink. Speak to us now and help us by your Holy Spirit who first inspired this Word. In the name of Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Amen.

What will you do with your 100,000?

What will you do with your 100,000? You are thinking, “100,000 what?” It depends on what we are talking about right? It’s not dollars, it’s hours.

On average those who are employed outside of the home will work around 100,000 hours in our working years. 50 hours a week times 50 weeks a year times 40 years.

What do you want to do with your 100,000 hours, how do you want to spend them, what do you want to think about them as you look back over them?

We may not realize it but we are asked to start thinking about those questions at a pretty young age. “What are you going to be when you grow up?” isn’t so much a question about a job, but about your life and what you are going to do with it?

100,000 hours is a huge amount of time, about a third of our days during our working years. Something that takes that much of our life is something we should think about from a Biblical perspective. How do we want to invest our life’s energy?

When we pray the Lord’s Prayer, “give us this day our daily bread” how does God answer that prayer?

Work. Not just our work, but the labors of countless thousands of others. Just a single loaf of bread is the work of a staggering number of people from the farmers

to truckers to bakers to produces to distributors to grocery stores to us through our work.

How often when we bow to say grace over a meal do we consider the vast number of people and infrastructure behind the blessings on our table and in our homes?

There are two Psalms that are back to back that speak of our labor, one speaks of the vanity of it and the other of the fruitfulness of it. One speaks of eating the bread of anxious toil and the other of eating the fruit of the labor of our hands. Will our labor be in vain or will it be fruitful? How can we have the second and not the first?

Psalm 127:1-2 Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.
2 It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.

Psalm 128:1-2 Blessed is everyone who fears the Lord, who walks in his ways!
2 You shall eat *the fruit of the labor of your hands*; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.

Do your work as unto the Lord and not as unto Man.

Psalm 127.

Psalm 127 addresses three fundamental, basic and universal aspects of human life: building/producing, security/safety, and raising and providing for a family.

From whom do we receive these basic elements of life? From God and God alone.

This is a profound truth, that everything that is most near and dear to us is ultimately futile apart from God. Without God there is no life, no family, no children, no work, no safety or security, no city.

The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, God is the sole creator and sustainer of all that is. To take God out of the picture is to have no picture, all is vanity, and all is doomed in the end.

A nation or city or family or person that does not have God as their defender, their fortress and strong tower and strength cannot stand. Its pride will go before its fall.

They labor in vain. Is this saying hard work and diligence are over rated or useless? No, but it is saying that when the day is done and we have done all we can, if God is not in it, if God doesn't bless it, if God doesn't enable it by His grace, then all is ultimately futile and lost.

Remember the Tower of Babel, they built for their own glory in their own ability, trusting themselves and they labored in vain, the work was never finished.

Remember the foolish builder who built on the sand of ignoring God and neglecting His Word, what he built was washed away, in vain.

Remember the rich young man who was very successful and built bigger and better barns, only to die and leave it all behind, in vain.

Those who fear the Lord and look to Him and do their work for Him will find fruit in their labors. Those who ignore or neglect or don't rely on God will find their labor in vain.

There are two ways to work, fretfully, nervously, anxiously, fearfully, striving in our own efforts, depending on ourselves, or peacefully, freely, depending on God and trusting Him and committing all our efforts to Him.

What do you have that you have not received? Why do we boast when it is not our doing? Why do we compare ourselves to others when it is not our doing, or theirs?

We defraud God when we deny Him the praise due Him for all that He has done for us. There should be no boasting on our part, but modesty and humility in acknowledging that while we may work hard, the fruit is from God and by His grace. Your intelligence, your strength, your abilities, your interests are all from God and any successes and accomplishments that come from them.

Are you not convinced that all is grace, that all comes from God's hand, that the Lord is the one who gives and the one who takes away?

Consider the people of Houston. How many countless people are saying on the news, they have lost everything? Do you know anyone who has lost everything?

Phama's sister Twila in Kansas lost their new home and everything in it in 1991 in a direct hit by a tornado. I have a high school classmate in Houston with water up to the window sills inside and out.

If we think that can't happen to us we are wrong, God can take it all in a heartbeat, an accident, a flood, fire, wind, earthquake. Consider Job, life was good and full of good things and in a moment, everything changed.

Job's wife told him to curse God and die.

Job 2:10 But he said to her, "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?"

Job 13:13, 15 Let come on me what may. 15 Though he slay me, I will hope in him.

We must hold loosely all we are and have, it is God's, we are not owners but stewards.

Work is not just what we do, or how we survive, work is a place where we experience the Gospel. It is another place where we experience God's grace and love and care and provision. It is another place where we experience the presence of God in our lives.

Remember Eric Liddell in *Chariots of Fire* saying that when he runs he feels God's pleasure. When we are doing what God created and called and gave us to do, it is there we should feel God's pleasure, His presence, His grace.

God is hiding behind all the mundane things we do, going to work, taking kids to soccer practice, taking out the trash, paying the bills, going to the doctor, doing homework.

Every place and every activity is a place of God's presence and activity. God is not just the God of the supernatural and the mystical, He is the God of the mundane and ordinary, of the ends and all the means to the ends.

There are no menial jobs, only menial attitudes.

In Houston right now they don't need fancy executives and Phd's and desk jockeys. They need sheet rockers and plumbers and electricians and utility workers and refinery workers, trash truck drivers. Don't tell me that's lowly work, it's necessary and God-glorifying.

All honest and legitimate work is holy. When God called us to take dominion over the earth and subdue it, it was a call for all kinds of work. We are all equal before the Lord. Your labor can be as fruitful and God-pleasing as mine.

And some of you will be rewarded far more than me, because God rewards faithfulness. The unseen person behind the scenes is every bit as significant in God's eyes as the one on the stage.

The school bus driver, the surgeon, the mother at home, the business man and the cashier all are doing the Lord's work, when they do their work by faith as unto the Lord.

God is your supervisor, God is your boss.

Shun every temptation to sloth and laziness, to cutting corners and cheating. Be honest, fair, just, faithful, go above and beyond, work hard.

To be called a hard worker is a badge of honor. Our heavenly Father is pleased when we are known by our hard work, our integrity, it reflects on God how we work.

We should think about our work with God in mind. How would He want me to do this job? When would He want me to get this done? How will my work reflect on Him and my witness as a Christian?

When you are doing planning, making five year goals, say if the Lord wills, or at least think it.

Doing our work as unto the Lord, and with a view to pleasing God will help us who are working for demeaning bosses or inconsiderate employers who ignore or criticize you.

God is in all you do, so do all you do as unto the Lord.

You reap what you sow, not from man, but from the Lord.

What you do as unto the Lord will never be done in vain.

Galatians 6:9-10 Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. 10 So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

God rewards and repays, not because He owes us anything, He doesn't, He owns everything. But He delights to reward and repay, to give good gifts, to be gracious and generous to us.

Colossians 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

To the world happiness is found in comfort, ease, honor, and a great accumulation of money and things. How many people after winning the lottery quit their jobs? What does that say about their view of work and what God's purpose for us is?

The fruit of our labor is not so we can no longer labor, it is in our labor, in the joy of doing what God has created and called us to do.

The fruit of our labor is God's gracious provision for what we need to sustain life in this life. It is enough to have enough and to be content with enough. Want what you have, not what you don't have or what others have.

Live and work for God's reward, for His blessing and favor, for His "well done, good and faithful servant." Live radically God-centered and see if that will not be the most fruitful life you can live and the most satisfying and joy producing. Live and work for God's reward not man's.

Do you work as unto the Lord and you will have the fruit of your labors.

What about when your work seems fruitless and frustrating?

Is God in that? Yes, and I will give you one brief example. Remember in John 21 after the resurrection when the disciples were fishing all night on Lake Galilee and caught nothing? There are times and seasons when our labors seem fruitless. But where was Jesus? He was there on the shore and He told them what to do even though they didn't recognize Him or realize He was there.

Jesus meets us in our failures and frustrations and fears, He is with us and helps us in our time of need, reminding us of our dependence on Him.

And what did Peter do when they made a big catch? He jumped in the water and swam to Jesus. Jesus is better than success, He is the treasure, keep Him at the center of all you do. And always count Him better than anything in this life. The best fruit is found in relationship with God.

Trust in Jesus and your labor will never be in vain.

Implications and application.

Scripture calls us to live and work different from the world. It calls us to live and work radically God-centered, God-focused, God-aware.

Parents, teach your children from an early age the value of work, hard work and work well done. In this way they will make a God-glorifying contribution to society.

Teach them by your own example as they watch you and teach them by how you talk about your work. Do you grumble and gripe and complain, or do you acknowledge God in your work, that it is from Him and for Him? Is it clear to you and them that all you have and are able to do is the grace of God and cause for thanks?

In the parts of your job that are unfair or unjust, are you able to be Christ-like in the midst of it, trusting God to make all things right and reward your labor in due time? Whatever you do, do it with an end to make God look great in the eyes of others and then your labor will be fruitful.

Think about the 100,000 ways you have to glorify God, to make Him known through who you are and how you do what you do. Work with eternity in mind.

Tuesday morning go to work for Christ, take Him to work, work as unto the Lord, not as people-pleasers, not as self-promoters, but as Christ-pleasers. Our utmost for His highest.

When you get to work, while you are still in the parking lot, or just sitting at your desk or walking into the shop or barn or getting behind the wheel, say a prayer, offer your work to the Lord, ask for divine assistance, ask Him to enable to do your work as an offering, aware of His grace and goodness.

Prayer: Father, as we go about our callings at home or school or work, may your will be done each day. May our labor not be in vain as we commit our way to you and look to you to be our wisdom and strength. Enable us to represent you well and do our work as unto you and whatever good others see in what we do, may you get the honor and glory.