



SABBATH & WORK

Working Through Faith

April 21, 2024

[Worship Music Playlist](#)

Prelude – You’re Beautiful by Phil Wickham

Welcome (**Jeremy**)

CALL TO WORSHIP | Psalm 27:4-6, 13

I'm asking GOD for one thing, only one thing: To live with him in his house my whole life long. I'll contemplate his beauty; I'll study at his feet. That's the only quiet, secure place in a noisy world, The perfect getaway, far from the buzz of traffic. God holds me head and shoulders above all who try to pull me down. I'm headed for his place to offer anthems that will raise the roof! Already I'm singing God-songs; I'm making music to GOD. Oh! Had I not believed that I should look upon GOD's goodness in the land of the living!

Song #1 – I Know You Jesus by Young Oceans

Song #2 – You Hold It All by Porter’s Gate

Dismiss Kids

INTRO / ANNOUNCEMENTS | **Guys Night, Resources & Rhythm**

Life after Easter is a return. A resurrection of a whole and holy cadence of Sabbath into Work into Sabbath into Work... **Getting into this rhythm apprenticed to *Jesus with others* is the focus of our gathered time and communal habits:**

RESOURCE SLIDE **Our Rhythms** | Sabbath Days (w/guides), Recollected Workday Prayers (push notifications), & Praying the Psalms -- **Our Practices** | Work Inventory, Work Examen, & Entering Awareness

These rhythms and practices help us get to what we desire: to make life, good. In everything we do, in the words and actions that build life, **to do so with God, in loyal companionship, within Love through faith and hope.** That’s [where we started](#) and what Paul told us:

So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three, but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:13)

The events of Easter gave witness to the reality that we live because of God’s love, and so we make life good within love. [Last week](#), we were reminded that our efforts start with ceasing, resting through faith in God’s finished work in a day made for us. But, as we’ll see today, we are not made for rest, but to work, to participate with God through faith in making life good. Will you pray with me as _____ comes to read of our work’s good start once and again in Jesus?

PRE-SERMON READING | Genesis & Colossians

When no bush of the open country was yet in the earth and no small plant of the field had yet sprung up...the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life...And the LORD God planted a garden in Eden...and there he put the man whom he had formed...**to work it and keep it**...Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper corresponding to him'...So the LORD God...took one of the man's ribs and...fashioned a woman and brought her to the man. (Genesis 2:5, 7-8, 15, 18, 21-22)

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And every way in which you make, manufacture, construct your life—in word and actions—do it all in loyalty and submission to the Lord Jesus...with a singular focus of heart, in awe and wonder in the presence of the Lord. Whatever you do, work from the soul as for the Lord and not for humanity... (Colossians 3:17, 22-23)

SERMON | From the Ceremony Into the Everyday

A resurrected, after-Easter life is a return, a starting over but different, as the author of Hebrews reminded us last week (see 11:39-12:2). The whole and holy cadence of creation, re-created in life with Jesus: Sabbath in the finished work of God before joining Him in “working and keeping,” making life, good. Or, as the fourth foundational (basic) truth of freedom extols:

Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God...(Exodus 20:9-10)

According to scripture, six days of holy labor, one day wholly resting in every season, is the calendared cadence of “the kingdom of God...at hand...in the midst of you” (Mark 2:15, Luke 17:21).

Before we labor, we cease striving. Before we do what we are made for, we rest with the One who made us. Before we make life, we remember that life begins good and very good with the Maker of Life. Our aspiration as a faith family is for each of us individually and in our life together to flourish as we help one another serve our neighbors by living in the rhythm of a day in whole rest and a week in holy work, **which is also God's expectation for us.**

Don't believe me? Here is what the apostle Paul says to the faith family of Thessalonica, those whom he dubbed “an example to all believers” (1 Thes. 1:7),

Aspire to live quietly, resting from the labor that is not yours, attending to the work made for you. You've heard all this from us before, but a reminder never hurts. We want you living in a way that will command the respect of outsiders, able to live dependent on no one. (1 Thessalonians 4:11-12)

Paul encourages the example of the faithful to *aspire* (seek to “live up to and toward”) a life in the rhythm in which they were created and re-created. A life that “commands the respect” has a “quality [that] must be sought from what follows”¹ (that shows a worthy, beautiful way forward to the very good). A rhythm of life that changes us *and* the world, going in and out again from a day of whole rest into six days of holy work. Now, [here is what we’ve said about the holiness of work](#).

THE HOLINESS OF WORK

- We are made for work.
- Work is whatever we do to cultivate a life.
- We work well within love: loving what we work for and those we work with.

Work, we’ve said, **is what we are made for**, created to work and keep the very good of our little gardens, the God-determined and allotted periods and boundaries of our dwelling place (Gen. 2:15, Eph. 2:10, Acts 17:26).

Work, then, **is whatever we do** (with words or in deeds, at home or in the office, by obligation or by preference) **to cultivate life** (that is, make and maintain life), **good**—or not. “Our work,” says pastor Tom Nelson,

“whatever it is, whether we are paid for it or not, is our specific human contribution to God’s ongoing creation and to the common good.”²

And so, as essayist, novelist, and Christian thinker Dorothy Sayers argues,

“work...should be looked upon—not as a necessary drudgery to be undergone for the purpose of making money, but as a way of life in which the nature of [humanity] should find its proper exercise and delight and so fulfill itself to the glory of God. That [work] should, in fact, be thought of as a creative activity undertaken for the love of the work itself; and that [humanity], made in God’s image, should make things, as God makes them, for the sake of doing well a thing that is well worth doing....”³ And so,

“...The only Christian work is good work well done.”⁴

Which brings us to the third thing we’ve said about the holiness of work:

THE HOLINESS OF WORK

- We are made for work.
- Work is whatever we do to cultivate a life.
- We work well within love: loving what we work for and those we work with.

¹ Thayer’s Greek Lexicon accessed here: <https://biblehub.com/greek/4043.htm>

² Tom Nelson, *Work Matters: connecting Sunday worship to Monday work*, 24.

³ Dorothy Sayers, quoted in, Schwehn and Bass, *Leading Lives That Matter: what we should do and who we should be*, 200.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

We work well, within love: loving what we work and those with whom we labor. To “work from the soul in loyalty and submission to the Lord Jesus”(3:23), as Paul encouraged the “raised with Christ” (Col. 3:1) faith family of Colosse, is to give complete self to the responsibilities and people with whom we make a life. Such wholehearted giving over to the “very good” of another cannot be coerced through religious duty nor a manipulation for earnings. **Our soul can only be so committed within love.** Only within love, as one’s already loved, as John keeps telling us...

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loves us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sin. (1 John 4:10)

...can our labors in living be in harmony with the "very good" of God's creating and re-creating:

...put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator...And above all these [attitudes, behaviors, character traits like compassion, kindness, humility, etc.] put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (Colossians 3:10,14)

Within the realities of love, we can experience the completeness and sacredness of the labors of living and the blessedness of submitting to the demands of love: the consistency, longevity, and exactness, that objective goodness which love requires. Speaking of Love as a living reality rather than an attitude of action, Sayers's contemporary, C.S. Lewis, argues,

"There is a kindness in Love: but Love and kindness are not coterminous, and when kindness is separated from the other elements of Love, it involves a certain fundamental difference to its object, and even something like contempt of it. Kindness, merely as such, cares not whether its object becomes good or bad, provided only that it escapes suffering. It is for people whom we care nothing about that we demand happiness on any terms: with our friends, our lovers, our children, we are exacting and would rather see them suffer much than be happy in contemptible and estranging modes."⁵

“The sterner side of love,” says Sayers, “is fully present in the... attitude to work...[of those] lovers of mankind.”⁶ We work well within love: loving the good work we are made for, the good in it, and the good that work is for because **Good work is the product of being at work with God.**

Or, as Paul put it, work done “fearing the Lord” (Col. 3:22), work done in “awe and wonder in the presence of the Lord” is **working through faith.**

As we said last week, **Our faith allows us to see that God was for us in creating, that He created good and very good...even us. Our faith allows us to see that God is still for us in recreating, in His overcoming what distorted His good intentions...even us. God has and is working for us—on our behalf, for our good and that is the true, real world where we make a life. Our faith allows us to see we live in a good world, where God works for good through our working with him in all the mess of living.**

⁵ C.S. Lewis, quoted in Dorothy Sayers, *The Mind Of The Maker*, 224-225.

⁶ Ibid. 225.

Which is why, in the words of Rabbi Heschel: “Faith is an attitude, the joy of living a life in which God has a stake, or being involved with God.”⁷

Faith sees and strives for that real world, a world easily missed without faith, as Greg Foster, scholar, and director of the Oikonomia Network, a theology at work collective, argues, “All day, every day, in our ordinary work, our work shapes the world. But our work also shapes us, and that means the world’s systems will shape us as we work—unless we work with awareness.”⁸ That is unless we go about our daily labors working through faith.

To have faith is to believe and trust that where we need to be (in God's life) and desire to be (in God's love) is where we are and are able to join God's work. Through faith, we make ourselves at home, abide, here and now, within the life of God, the love of God, that finished work of Jesus that continues until all things are made new (Colossians 1:15-23).

And so, paraphrasing what pastor and author Frederick Buechner described for us last week, “To work through faith is to respond to what we see [that we are made to work, competent to make life, good within the love of God for us, for the responsibilities given, and for the ones we labor alongside and on behalf]... by trying to live up to it and toward it through all the wonderful and terrible things...by looking to see it again and see it better.”⁹

Our workday recollected prayers, workday examen, and workday inventory are meant to help us do that: work through faith, pay attention, and be attuned to the reality of God at our work, a life lived within the love of God for us and our work. Just think about what sort of work we could do and how well we could work if we worked through faith!

DISCUSSION |

Our desire in this season is not merely to talk about Sabbathing and working within the love of God through faith and hope but to help one another actually make life good through that whole and holy rhythm. We’ll do that by having time to share and start processing with one another. We are beginning conversations here that can continue over dinner tables in Gospel Community, through which we can hold each other accountable, making ourselves at home in God’s life and love.

So here are some conversation starters¹⁰:

- What will you be doing as your “work” tomorrow?
- How does faith as “the joy of...being involved with God” factor into your work?
- In what ways can you be attentive and responsive to God’s love within your labors?
- How can we join you (pray, encourage, equip) in your working with God?

⁷ Abraham Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom*, 66.

⁸ Greg Foster, “Economic Wisdom: essentials for glorifying God and loving neighbor,” in *Whatever You Do: six foundations for an integrated life*, 75.

⁹ Frederick Buechner, *The Clown In The Belfry*, 20.

¹⁰ Adapted from Tom Nelson’s article “The Local Church: uniquely designed and empowered to promote human flourishing,” in *Whatever You Do*, n68, 114-115.

CORPORATE CONFESSION & COMMUNION¹¹ |

LORD of Creation, create in us a whole and holy rhythm of life

composed of hours that sustain rather than stress, of days that deliver rather than destroy,
of time that delights rather than degrades.

LORD of Liberation, by the rhythm of your truth, set us free

from the bondage and baggage that break us, from the Pharaohs and fellows who fail us, from the plans and pursuits that prey upon us.

LORD of Resurrection, may we be raised into the rhythm of your Life,

dead to deceitful calendars, dead to fleeting friend requests, dead to the empty peace of our accomplishments.

To our packed-full planners, **we bid, "Peace!"**

To our over-caffeinated consciences, **we say, "Cease!"**

To our suffocating selves, **LORD, grant our release.**

Drowning in a sea of deadlines and death chimes, **we rest in You, our lifeline.**

By your ever-restful grace, **allow us to enter your Sabbath rest as your Sabbath rest enters into us.**

For...

Jesus has done good work for us. The Holy Spirit is doing a good work in us.

And God our Father equips and calls each of us to go out and do good works, works he has prepared in advance for us to do, and that he alone, **by his power and his Spirit, will bring to completion through us.**

For all the promises of God find their Yes in Jesus.

That is why it is **through Jesus we utter our Amen to God for his glory. Hallelujah! Amen.**

Song #3 – Hidden by Citizens

Song #4 - Breastplate of St. Patrick by Porter's Gate

BENEDICTION | 1 Corinthians 13

As we rest in the day made for us, we prepare to enter into the work for which we are made
[**LIGHT THE CANDLE**], remembering the reality in which we live:

Love covers the errors and faults of others.

Love trusts having confidence in the goodness of others.

Love lives towards its confidence with joy.

Love does so for the long haul,

enduring with courage and calmness.

So now, make yourself at home through faith and hope in love.

DISMISS

¹¹ Adapted from *Common Prayer: a liturgy for ordinary radicals*, 554, & *Every Moment Holy*, Vol 3, xv.